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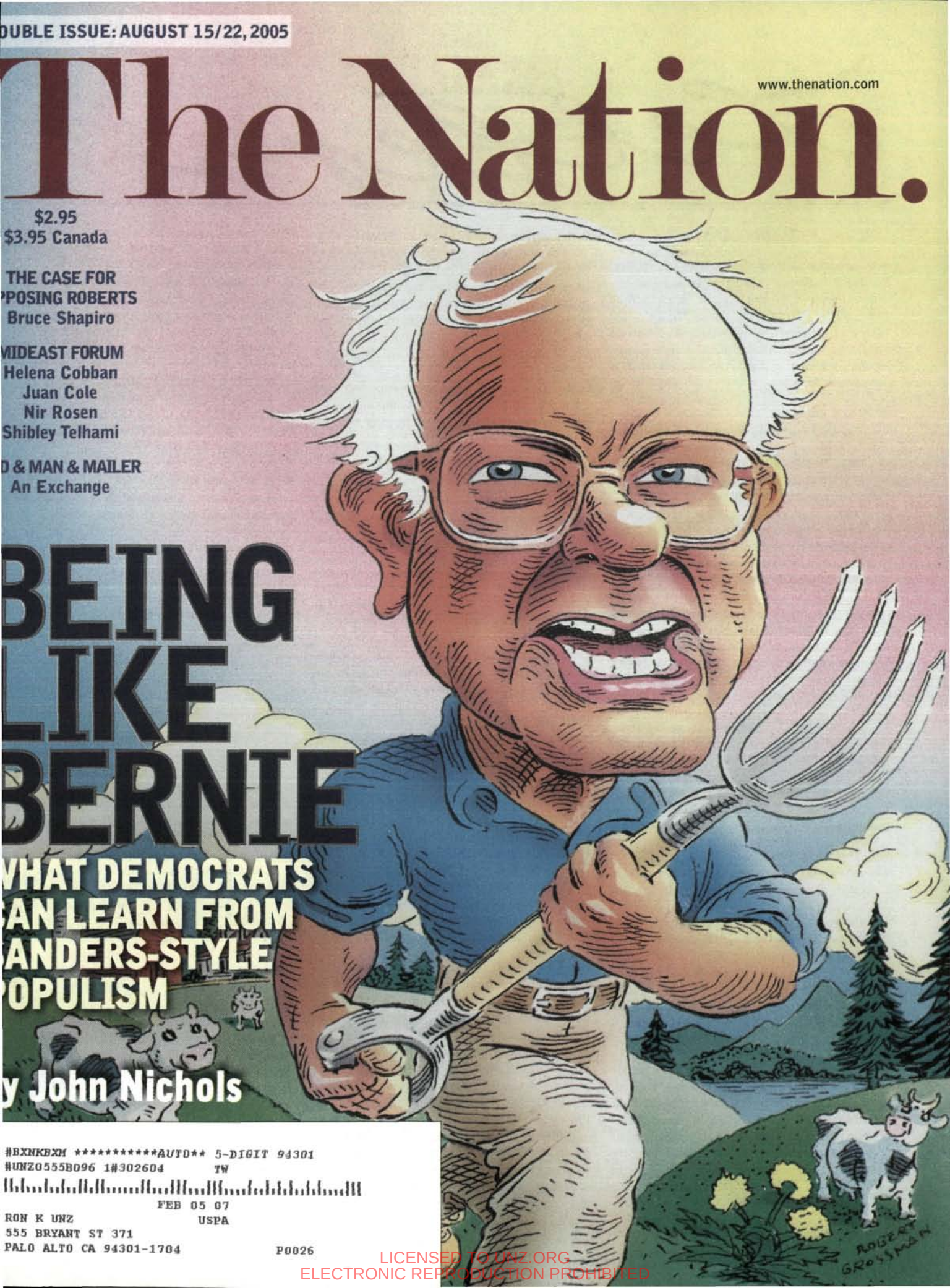
An Exchange



BEING LIKE BERNIE

WHAT DEMOCRATS CAN LEARN FROM SANDERS-STYLE POPULISM

by John Nichols

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LETTERS

Letters

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

GOD AND MAN AND MAILER

A tsunami of letters—from Jews, Catholics, Buddhists, atheists, agnostics, humanists, existentialists and the unaffiliated (almost all of them men)—denounced Norman Mailer's "On Sartre's God Problem," our June 6 reprint of Mailer's remarks, in Libération, *commemorating the centenary of Jean-Paul Sartre's birth. A sampling follows.* —*The Editors*

Fitchburg, Mass.

■ Sartre had no God problem, but obviously Norman Mailer does. Without a scintilla of evidence, Mailer promotes the notion of a "God who is an artist," an imperfect God "who suffers the uncertainties of existence." Of course, Mailer is free to hypothesize about the divine, but even he has no authority to suggest that Sartre somehow fell short by refusing to embrace such speculative religiosity. Mailer criticizes Sartre for being "alien to the possibility that existentialism might thrive" if it would simply "assume that indeed we do have a God," but he should realize that such "assumptions" were perhaps too "simple" for a thinker of Sartre's caliber. DAVID A. NIOSE

North Miami Beach, Fla.

■ Poor Norman Mailer, who is lost and rudderless in his narcissistic semanticisms and agnosticisms. And poor *Nation* readers, who deserve to celebrate Sartre's centenary with greater insights, higher hopes and better existential road maps to the potentials of the present pregnant moment for self and social actualization of our humanity. RALPH ALAN DALE

New York City

■ It's down on our knees, is it, Norman? Of course you've always had the inside line on cleanliness, godliness and sexiness, and now you have the special authority that comes with senility. But your basic point is well taken. We wasted too much of our youth heeding the dictates of Sartre. When I'm your age I hope to be able to write much the same dismissal of your inflated reputation. Not, however, on the grounds of atheism. Just windbaggery. THOMAS DISCH

Baltimore

■ Norman Mailer's view of the universe seems absurdly anthropocentric and ethically limited. To suggest that the devastation wrought by a tsunami is evidence of a failure in the design of tectonic plates, as if the whole universe ought to be designed for the accommodation of humans, is rather like suggesting that your armpit ought to be designed for the accommodation of the trillion or so bacteria that live there and the unpredictable cataclysms wrought by inundation with soap are evidence of divine neglect.

The body of the earth may be supposed to have its own purposes, independent of those of its residents, though interacting with them. The failure of humans to understand those purposes or seek ways to minimize the adverse interactions is not evidence of divine limitations but of our own. Many of these are chosen, not intrinsic: We know enough that we could do better if we would. Blaming an imperfect God for the results of our own environmentally reckless and personally callous choices is a callow cop-out. KATHARINE W. RYLAARSDAM

Jerusalem

■ It is wonderful receiving a theology lesson from Norman Mailer. He has re-created God in his image with a bit of help from William James's finite moral maker of the universe. However, in lambasting the God of religion he forgets the most important quality of the God of the religious tradition he ostensibly comes from. The God of Judaism not only demands mankind's participation in shaping the world—God demands mankind's walking in the way of God in compassion, kindness and goodness. This is not a particularly Mailerean theme, but it is the heart of the traditional Jewish vision of the world and provides the guideline to all the ideal and visionary transformative movements that would bring mankind to greater justice and well-being. SHALOM FREEDMAN

Boston

■ Norman Mailer concludes that we have a "real need for a God with whom we can engage our lives." This reminds me of the title of a book I saw once: *If You Can't Live Without Me, How Come You Aren't Dead Yet?* In theology as in romance, there is no guarantee we'll get what we need, and yet we struggle along somehow. Both kinds of frustration probably help keep novelists in business. JOHN BERGSTROM

Longmeadow, Mass.

■ Norman Bates of *Psycho* fame would have provided better commentary than Norman Mailer. Given the choice between a flatulent writer of fiction and a fictional character, I'll go with the man of character! What Mailer lacks in his understanding of philosophy is exceeded only by what he lacks in his understanding of the fields of writing, astronomy, political theory and common sense. He is full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. His tales are those of an idiot. He *is* an idiot! In the future, try to get a thoughtful person to comment on the centenary of a philosopher. Don't give the job to a celebrity who exists as a legend in his own mind. JOHN J. FITZGERALD

MAILER REPLIES

Provincetown, Mass.

■ The letters by David Niose, Ralph Alan Dale, Thomas Disch, John Bergstrom and John Fitzgerald read like blogs from Lower Swamp Hollow. They are as ad hominem as mosquitoes. If I were a good Christian, I might say, "Oh, Lord, they, too, are Your creatures and they need a little blood so much. Let them have mine."

In contrast, the letter from Jerusalem by Shalom Freedman was good rabbinic boilerplate. As one Jew to another, I would ask Shalom, "What, then, was the Holocaust? Should we look upon it as our punishment? Has Jehovah come back because we Jews do not walk sufficiently 'in compassion, kindness, and goodness,' or does the Holocaust reinforce my supposition that God is not All-Powerful?"

Katharine W. Rylaarsdam's letter is interesting. Does she suggest at the end that our pollution of the earth was related to the tsunami? In the middle, she is certainly forthright when she states that the earth is independent of us. The thought does suggest a schism within our deity; otherwise, it must posit more than one god for world and earthly affairs. This again, opens the real possibility that the Lord is not All-Good and All-Powerful. Too bad! We seem to have a need to cling like leeches to a theological oxymoron. NORMAN MAILER

'BAD IDEA'? NOT REALLY

Washington, DC; Pittsburgh

■ Describing Britain's leading union of university faculty's boycott of Israeli scholars as a "bad idea," Jon Wiener overlooks the complexities of the conditions of academic freedom in Israel and its occupied territories ["Israeli Boycott: A Mistake," June 6]. The boycott, which has since been revoked on grounds of its particularly problematic strategy, appears, like all academic boycotts, to be simply a challenge to academic freedom that suppresses voices of dissent within Israeli civil society.

Yet the freedom that Israeli professors and students enjoy is not a right shared by their Palestinian colleagues and students in the occupied territories. Almost 200 Palestinian students have been killed since September 2000, and about 270 schools have been damaged by Israeli artillery fire. Both Bethlehem University and the Open University were bombed in 2001. In 2003 Hebron University and the Palestine Polytechnic University were closed down for months. Twenty-two towns have been virtually cut off from local schools by Israel's "security fence." The Israeli wall, a nonidentical reminder of South African apartheid, has blocked

(Continued on Page 29)

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IN THIS ISSUE

2 **LETTERS**

EDITORIALS & COMMENT

3 VOTING RIGHTS FOR ALL

4 LABOR SPLITS

6 ROBERTS'S CHILL HEART
Bruce Shapiro

8 PRESS WATCH
Crusaders at the CPB
Scott Sherman

10 COMIX NATION
How Halliburton Can Make It Up to Us
Ted Rall

12 LETTER FROM GROUND ZERO
The Bomb and Karl Rove
Jonathan Schell

COLUMNS

6 DEADLINE POET
Rove Contemplates Fine Distinctions
Calvin Trillin

13 DIARY OF A MAD LAW PROFESSOR
Telly-Tommy
Patricia J. Williams

14 THE LIBERAL MEDIA
The *Times*, It Is A-Ragin'
Eric Alterman

ARTICLES

15 BEING LIKE BERNIE
What Democrats can learn from Sanders.
John Nichols

20 UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES
A forum with Helena Cobban,
Juan Cole, Nir Rosen, Shibley Telhami.

25 EVEN
Black-brown strife in Southern California.
Susan Straight

BOOKS & THE ARTS

31 AFARY AND ANDERSON: Foucault and the Iranian Revolution
Jonathan Rée

36 FLEMING: Son of the Rough South
MAY: The Informant
Diane McWhorter

38 Bitterness (poem)
Debora Greger

41 FILMS
2046
Broken Flowers
Darwin's Nightmare
Stuart Klawans

Cover art by Robert Grossman, cover design by Gene Case & Stephen Kling/Avenging Angels; illustrations by Christoph Niemann and Peter O. Zierlein

EDITORIALS

Voting Rights for All

America's long and deliberate embrace of segregation was ended by many things, but no law dismantled the Jim Crow South and created real opportunities for black political participation more than the Voting Rights Act of 1965. By tearing down the barriers to equal opportunity at the ballot box, the act removed the essential political mechanisms that maintained segregation and white supremacy. As the Supreme Court declared more than a century ago, the equal right to vote is fundamental because it is "preservative of all rights." Now, with key provisions of the act up for renewal, it is essential that even as concerned Americans focus on necessary fights over Bush's judicial nominees, they keep their eyes on the prize of renewing the Voting Rights Act and insuring the commitment of the Justice Department to its enforcement.

The genius of the act, which celebrates its fortieth anniversary on August 6, was not just that it abolished literacy and other tests that had been used to deny blacks and other minorities the right to vote but also that it prohibited "covered jurisdictions" from implementing new voting practices without clearing them with federal officials. States' rights supporters resented this provision, yet to see its continuing importance one need only examine legislation recently passed in Georgia that bars voters without specific forms of government-issued photo ID. The measure requires Justice Department pre-approval; it remains to be seen whether officials will do the right thing and reject the law. The Rev. Jesse Jackson spoke truth when he told this year's NAACP convention, "Our voting rights are under attack, coupled with a growing lack of government enforcement. The silence of the Attorney General and the closed-door policy of the Department of Justice are chilling."

GOP leaders, meanwhile, try to sound supportive of the act's extension even as the details of the proposed legislation remain undefined. House Judiciary Committee chair James Sensenbrenner promised at the NAACP convention to introduce legislation to extend the act, declaring, "We cannot let discriminatory practices of the past resurface to threaten future gains." A week later he was quoted as saying that the sections of the act that should be renewed are "an open question."

Under the umbrella of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, a broad coalition of civil rights, labor and religious groups has come up with a good list of what supporters of the Voting Rights Act should be seeking. It begins with a twenty-five-year renewal of Section 5, the requirement that jurisdictions in nine states with documented histories of discriminatory voting practices, and local jurisdictions in seven others, submit planned changes in their election laws for clearance. Other provisions on the list include renewal of Section 203, which requires that language assistance be provided to voters who need it; renewal of the authorization of the Attorney General to appoint election monitors; creation of a provision for the recovery of expert fees in voting rights litigation in order to assure that costs are not prohibitive; and restoration of stronger standards for protecting voting rights, undermined by Supreme Court decisions in redistricting cases in Louisiana and Georgia in 2000 and 2003.

In 1982, when current Supreme Court nominee John Roberts was arguing against strengthening sections of the act that had been diluted by the courts, aggressive lobbying helped produce overwhelming bipartisan support for a stronger act in the House and eighty-five votes—including that of Strom Thurmond—in the Senate. Now, at a time when the Administration is calling for increased democracy around the world, Republicans as well as Democrats must insure its vitality at home by standing firmly in support of all Americans' right to vote.

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Labor Splits

With the heaving sound of an old tree suddenly splitting apart in a storm, the labor movement is finally breaking up. After four of the country's largest unions announced they would boycott the AFL-CIO's late July convention in Chicago, officials from SEIU and the Teamsters announced that they were leaving the federation. Whether they all formally depart the AFL-CIO, the dissident unions—which also include the United Food and Commercial Workers, Laborers and UNITE HERE—have formed what amounts to a rival federation in the Change to Win Coalition (CTWC).

Given the stakes, the debate that preceded the split was not all it could have been. Why, if the dissidents meant what they said about not wanting to quit the AFL-CIO, didn't they run a candidate against John Sweeney? (John Wilhelm of UNITE HERE was the most-discussed potential challenger.) Yes, AFL-CIO conventions have a scripted format and the result may have been foreordained, but it is hard to accept that there was no possibility of changing that culture, of using the occasion of an election to move an agenda from within. The insurgents claim that Sweeney "did everything he could to block real change," in the words of SEIU's Tom Woodruff. But those in Sweeney's camp counter that the CTWC partisans flatly refused to compromise on anything—"my way or the highway" is how they describe SEIU president Andy Stern's stance.

While Stern may be Mr. Highway (indeed, he likes to talk about "roads" and "signs"), he does have a clear sense of direction: It's true, as SEIU argues, that having multiple unions compete in a single industrial sector hampers efforts to confront today's corporate adversaries. Still, in their own organizing strategies, the Teamsters, a key CTWC partner, don't even practice what the coalition preaches. Maybe CTWC's innovative approach will pay off, increasing labor's numbers and political clout, but there are real concerns about the political implications of this messy divorce, coming as it does as progressives struggle to maintain a foothold in the electoral arena. As the CAFTA fight demonstrated, labor needs all the unity—and backbone—it can muster. Both sides recognize the importance of holding Democrats accountable, which is a positive development as long as it means building power for the progressive movement, not making tactical alliances with Republicans who cast an occasional pro-labor vote. (One promising sign that principle lives at the federation: its long-awaited call, urged by US Labor Against the War, for the withdrawal of US troops from Iraq.)

Now the challenge for both sides is to get beyond recriminations and hold themselves to common goals: maintaining solidarity among workers and their unions; organizing on a much greater scale; building long-term political power for workers; nurturing responsive, democratic local unions; empowering workers of all colors and both genders as leaders; and fostering the rank-and-file class consciousness that makes labor a movement. If the two sides compete to see who does these things better, rather than sniping at and undermining each other, there is a chance that this split could provide the jolt labor needs.

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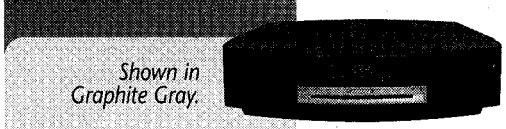

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COMMENT

Roberts's Chill Heart

Is Judge John Roberts worth a fight? That's the question Senate Democrats and civil rights lobbyists were asking as the amiable nominee made his let's-get-acquainted rounds on Capitol Hill. To put it bluntly: With Judge Roberts's reputation as a skilled and unimpeachable Supreme Court litigator, with his long bipartisan list of Washington friends, with George W. Bush sure to appoint another conservative if he's defeated, why bother?

Call as witness Ansche Hedgepeth, a 12-year-old girl who in 2000 made the mistake of eating a french fry on the Washington Metro while police were in the midst of a quality-of-life crackdown. Officers arrested Ansche, handcuffed her, threw her in the back of a squad car and kept her in lockup for three hours. This big-government approach to childrearing offended Ansche's mother as well as the conservative Rutherford Institute of Virginia, which sued on her behalf. The case ended up before Judge Roberts, who refused to expunge her record. Why? Arresting Ansche, he wrote, advanced "the legitimate goal of promoting parental awareness and involvement with children who commit delinquent acts."

How will this judge, who endorses the manacling of a youngster over a snack, rule when confronted with the profound civil liberties challenges of the "war on terror"? We don't need to speculate. The day after his interview with Bush, Roberts and two other Reagan/Bush appointees on the DC Circuit reinstated military tribunals at Guantánamo—ruling that courts have no authority to review the White House's determination to deny those prisoners Geneva Convention protections.

Together these two very different cases give the lie to any suggestion that Judge Roberts lacks a track record. Enthusiastic expansion of the power of the executive branch, whether in the guise of policing or the presidency, is the most consistent thread of Roberts's career. In this sense he's no conservative; he's an apostle of big and often unreviewable government—the perfect nominee for a White House that excluded military lawyers, the State Department and even John Ashcroft's top aides from the inner circles of post-9/11 justice policy. The Guantánamo ruling was a stunning embrace of the Administration's expansive view of presidential power, placing the Guantánamo tribunals beyond reach of Congress or courts. It is a refutation, as well, of international law, stripping courts of the ability to enforce a treaty, with backwash over other key cases destined for the Supreme Court. Detainees in Guantánamo held without charge have cases coming before the DC circuit in a few weeks, and José Padilla, the American held in the brig as an "enemy combatant," is not far behind. No wonder Roberts—wired for life into the GOP patronage network—became the Administration's top choice.

Another lie about Roberts's nomination is the notion that his most contentious statements should be written off as a lawyer's responsibility to his clients, not reflections of personal conviction. Exhibit A in this argument is Roberts's now-famous footnote in *Rust v. Sullivan*, the 1991 health clinic "gag rule" case in which he argued as deputy solicitor general that *Roe v. Wade* was "wrongly decided and should be overruled." Just doing my job, just reflecting Administration policy, Roberts said in his 2003 confirmation hearing as an appellate judge—a line repeated by Republicans and Democrats alike in recent days. In fact, the *Rust v. Sullivan* footnote went so far and so enthusiastically outside any argument relevant to the case that Roberts might fairly be accused of politicizing his briefs. But leave that aside. The real issue is that Roberts was hardly a passive receptacle, a mouthpiece without conviction. At the time of *Rust v. Sullivan* Roberts had been designated by Ken Starr as his "political" deputy—running interference on sensitive policy issues that otherwise would have been left to career officials. It was a job that didn't exist in either the Carter or Clinton

CALVIN TRILLIN

KARL ROVE CONTEMPLATES FINE DISTINCTIONS

If somebody committed a crime, they will no longer work for my Administration.
—George W. Bush

Ann Richards wasn't hard to beat—
Not once we said she seemed to greet
A lot of girls who looked quite burly
And, all and all, just not too girly.

We smear, we smear. We slime, we slime.
It's fine if it is not a crime.

McCain, a hero, led the pack,
Until our whispered sneak attack
Said, "Hero, sure, but he was changed
By prison. John is quite deranged."

We smear, we smear. We slime, we slime.
It's fine if it is not a crime.

Though our guy'd hidden in the Guard,
John Kerry, hero, soon was tarred
By Swift-boat proxies who'd exact
A fearful price without one fact.

We smear, we smear. We slime, we slime.
It's fine if it is not a crime.

Joe Wilson's op-ed piece implied
When we lacked facts we simply lied.
We showed our toughness in this strife:
When he struck us, we smeared his wife.

We smear, we smear. We slime, we slime.
It's fine if it is not a crime.

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COMMENT

administrations. The White House and Starr trusted Roberts not just to reflect legal policy but to make it.

Which gets us to another lie. At this writing the White House has agreed to release some historical documents from the Reagan years, but it claims that Roberts's memos as deputy solicitor general are a matter of attorney-client privilege. But attorney-client privilege ends where policy-making begins. The Judiciary Committee has every reason to wonder about the role of the political deputy. Senators have every reason to inquire about the language Roberts used when crafting that argument against *Roe*. The reasoning a Supreme Court nominee brought to fighting against strong Voting Rights Act enforcement, to ending school desegregation and to stripping Congress of oversight of federal environmental enforcement are all matters of public concern.

Roberts's professional biography suggests that every political choice he has made has been partisan and often rigidly ideological, from his clerkship with William Rehnquist through his role as a Republican adviser in *Bush v. Gore*. (Memo to Judiciary Committee: There's nothing out of bounds in asking Roberts's view of that case and whether he thinks the Supreme Court majority's ruling amounted to judicial activism.) Vigorous opposition to Roberts offers a powerful lesson on the intersection of politics and law in Bush's Washington. Bush may not have had a "litmus test" on *Roe v. Wade*, but he was precise about the political chemistry of his nominees. It's revealing that virtually all those floated as Supreme Court finalists were members of the Federalist Society. Roberts may not—or may—have been a member (at this writing the White House uses the deniable "no recollection" to explain why his name shows up in the group's confidential leadership directory for 1997–98), but between 1999 and 2003 his main professional association was with the fiercely antiregulatory National Legal Center for the Public Interest. As a judge he's written that the Endangered Species Act should not apply to a California toad because it doesn't cross state lines—a view of federal authority so extreme it would prohibit the EPA from getting involved in purely local landfills or chemical dumps.

Is Roberts's confirmation a foregone conclusion? There are still several weeks before hearings and a likely Senate vote, and his would not be the first nomination to take an unexpected turn. At this point in 1991 the Clarence Thomas nomination seemed unassailable, and in 1986 few seriously believed that Robert Bork would go down to defeat. Roberts's record and his biography may yet reveal additional troubling details.

Is it worth expending energy, emotion and money to oppose Roberts? Let's return to Ansche Hedgepeth and her french fry arrest. It may seem absurd to suggest that such a trivial case disqualifies a judge from a seat on the Supreme Court. Yet Roberts, in that case as in others, embraces a quietly authoritarian vision of social control that should raise alarm bells on both the right and the left. Managing to wring out of the law any vestige of sensible, pragmatic humanity, Roberts saw instead only the imperative to maintain ideological consistency. This is not "compassionate conservatism." If "advise and consent" means anything, it is that senators and the constituencies that agitate behind them have every reason to oppose a lifetime Supreme Court appointment for that kind of chill heart.

BRUCE SHAPIRO

Bruce Shapiro, director of The Nation Institute's Supreme Court Watch during the Thomas, Breyer and Ginsburg nominations, is the author of Shaking the Foundations: 200 Years of Investigative Journalism in America.

MINORITY/MAJORITY

■ **Permanent Minority.** After the terrorist attack in London, no top Democrat pointed out how the event calls into question George W. Bush's "fight the terrorists in Iraq" strategy. The *New York Times* noted that "elected Democrats are unlikely to cite the London bombings to fault the White House" for its misguided policies and dishonest rationale for war.

■ **Toward the Majority.** Keeping the heat on re Karl Rove's leak of Valerie Plame's CIA status: Democrats on the House Intelligence Committee, led by Representative John Tierney, joined in sending a letter to Bush demanding he revoke Rove's security clearance. Democratic senators forced a vote on revoking Rove's clearance, putting Republicans on record as willing to protect someone under federal investigation for breaking national security laws.

—DAVID SIROTA

Crusaders at the CPB

[redacted] "It's an elitist enterprise," Newt Gingrich declared in 1995, amid a fierce (and unsuccessful) Republican campaign to "zero out" funds for the Public Broadcasting Service and National Public Radio. At Gingrich's side stood South Dakota Senator Larry Pressler, who excoriated viewers of Washington's PBS affiliate, WETA. One out of every eight contributors to WETA, declared Pressler, "is a millionaire, one out of seven has a wine cellar and one out of three spent time in Europe in the last three years." A decade later public broadcasting is again under pressure, but this time the threat comes not primarily from Congress—which recently voted down a proposal to gut the annual budget of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, an entity that provides essential funding for public radio and TV stations—but from an activist CPB board brimming over with conservatives.

Kenneth Tomlinson, a former editor in chief of *Reader's Digest* and a friend of Karl Rove, is the current chairman of the CPB board and the man chiefly responsible for the latest crusade against public broadcasting. In recent months Tomlinson has installed Patricia Harrison, a former co-chair of the Republican National Committee, as president of the CPB; permitted a White House staffer to draft guidelines for two new CPB ombudsmen (Ken Bode and William Schulz, formerly of *Reader's Digest*); and secretly hired an obscure, Indiana-based conservative consultant, Frederick Mann, to systematically analyze the content of several PBS and NPR programs: *NOW With Bill Moyers*, *The Diane Rehm Show*, *Tucker Carlson: Unfiltered* and *The Tavis Smiley Show*. Mann's sprawling content analysis, riddled with typos and

(Continued on Page 30)

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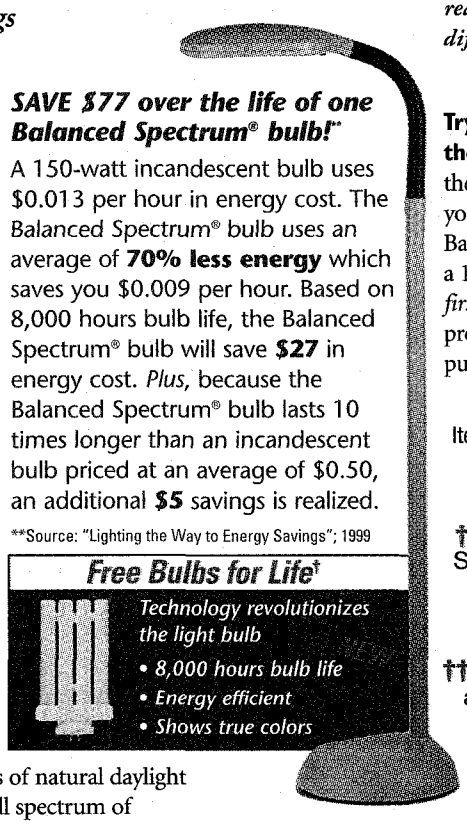

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Ted Rall, a political cartoonist and writer, is working on a book about Central Asia.

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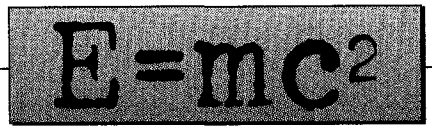

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Richard Wolfson (Ph.D., Dartmouth College) is Professor of Physics at Middlebury College in Vermont. Decades of teaching at Middlebury, with its strong emphasis on the humanities, have made him an expert at demonstrating the logic and significance of physics to students from many fields. His writings have appeared in *Scientific American*. He is author of *Physics for Scientists and Engineers*.

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JONATHAN SCHELL

The Bomb and Karl Rove

Like every important government crisis, the outing of undercover CIA officer Valerie Plame by the President's chief political adviser, deputy chief of staff Karl Rove, perhaps among others, must be seen in many contexts at once. (As all the world knows, Rove's aim was to discredit Plame's husband, Joseph Wilson, who had publicly disproved the Administration's claim that Iraq was buying uranium yellowcake from Niger—a key element in the Administration's justifications for the Iraq War.) Howard Fineman of *Newsweek* and Sidney Blumenthal of *Salon* point to the broader story of Rove's habitual practice of defending his political clients by smearing their competitors and detractors. Blumenthal titles his piece "Rove's War" and Fineman speaks of "The World According to Rove." Frank Rich of the *New York Times*, on the other hand, suggests that the most important war to look at is the one in Iraq. He says that the injustice to the Wilsons and even to the CIA is secondary: "The real crime here remains the sending of American men and women to Iraq on fictitious grounds." In other words, what's important is not the "war" but the *war*. Surely, they are all right. It's true that the harm to the Wilsons cannot be compared to the deaths of thousands in the misbegotten conflict, but it's also true that the resolution of the scandal is likely to have a lasting impact on American politics, and even on the American system of government. Perhaps the most important political question is whether the Bush Administration is to be held accountable for any of its actions, or whether it now enjoys complete impunity and a free field of action to do whatever it likes—from waging war to designing and presiding over systems of torture to breaking domestic law.

There are other contexts to consider, too. If Rich is right that the scandal is really about the Iraq War, then we have to ask what the war was about. The Administration's chief answer is weapons of mass destruction and, more particularly, nuclear weapons. The atomic signature is scrawled all over the scandal. It is present, of course, in the uranium the President falsely said Iraq was seeking from Niger. And Plame, as it turns out, worked for the CIA on proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. To defend its nuclear lies, the Administration destroyed a (possible) source of nuclear truth. The smear campaign thus did double damage in the nuclear-weapon field: It propped up, however briefly, the erroneous justification for the war while shutting down authentic information on the broader problem. The nuclear issue popped up again in a State Department memo Colin Powell brought with him on Air Force One shortly after Wilson's op-ed piece appeared. It is now famous because it disclosed Plame's identity as Wilson's wife. Less noticed is that the bulk of the memo was devoted to rebutting the Niger uranium allegation. This must be one of the most rebutted claims in history. Before Wilson ever spoke up, it had been disproved by several government agencies; the director of the Atomic Energy Agency, Mohammed ElBaradei; and, of course, the State Department. (As for Powell, in February 2003 he had told the UN Security Council, "My colleagues, every statement I make today is backed up by sources, solid sources. These are not assertions. What we're giving you are facts and conclusions based on solid intelligence.")

Whatever else the scandal is, it is also an episode in the six-decade history of the nuclear age. In the wake of the cold war, many people imagined that nuclear danger had disappeared. A decade of utter neglect followed. Then in 1998 the Indian and Pakistani nuclear tests launched the two countries on a nuclear arms race. Soon other countries, including North Korea and Iran, were knocking at the door of the nuclear club. But it wasn't until 9/11 that the neglected peril reared up again in the public mind—and returned to the center of policy. The fictional danger of an Iraqi bomb bursting in an American city was, of course, the chief justification for the war, but it was more than that. It was the linchpin of the broader policy of preventive military strikes—necessary, the President said, to forestall the hostile states from acquiring weapons of mass destruction. In his words, "as a matter of common sense and self-defense, America will act against such emerging threats before they are fully formed."

At the root of the policy was a radical reconception of the way to stop proliferation. Hitherto, the policy had been to address it by negotiation and disarmament treaties. Now it was to be addressed by military force. The decade of neglect had led to the most severe collision of nuclear policy with nuclear reality since the Cuban missile crisis. The Iraq War was the result, though not the only one. While the US military was looking for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, where there were none, it was in effect ignoring them in North Korea, which reportedly was either acquiring or expanding a nuclear arsenal, and in Iran, which was pressing forward down the nuclear path.

It's worth recalling that the Vietnam War, too, was in part the product of misguided nuclear strategy. Policy-makers, well aware that they could not win a nuclear "general war" with the Soviet Union in the Central European theater, hoped instead to win a "limited war" with conventional arms on the "periphery." When it went wrong, the consequence was the Watergate crisis, born directly of Nixon's fury at antiwar protesters.

That chain of reasoning died with the cold war, but nuclear danger lived on to produce new and possibly more dangerous illusions. The worst is that the spread of weapons of mass destruction and their associated technology and know-how can be stopped, or prevented in advance, by arms. Once that conclusion was accepted, mere hints of danger, wisps of fact and speculations became actionable, bomb-able. But if there is one thing in this world that cannot be bombed out of existence, it is an illusion. And illusions, when rigidly defended, breed encounters with the law. Thus did a mistaken revolution in nuclear policy, proceeding under the guise of the "war on terror," produce the lies that produced the war that produced the whistleblowing that produced the smears that produced the blown cover that produced the cover-up that produced the legal investigation that produced the political and legal crisis that now swirls around Karl Rove.

Jonathan Schell is The Nation Institute's Harold Willens Peace Fellow.

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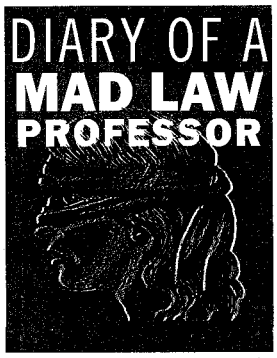
PATRICIA J. WILLIAMS

Telly-Tommy



Former Wisconsin Governor and Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy Thompson has volunteered to have a radio tracking chip the size of a pinhead implanted in his arm. It will contain all his personal information and allow him to be globally positioned round the clock. Since he's on the board of Verichip, the company that makes the device, I can only surmise that he's banking on this as a marketing strategy for a technology Homeland Security will soon roll out for us all. A nice little subcutaneous chip with satellite potential is even more efficiently panoptic than a national identity card. But it does have an awfully Orwellian edge, tinged as it is by images of parolees, the chronically ill and bionic claws. What better way to give it an aura of respectability than to implant it in a stodgy old cheesehead like Thompson? It's like those soothing canards we tell children: Pulling this tooth with this rope, those leeches and a set of tongs isn't going to hurt one bit. You won't feel a thing while we sort you by race, religion, buying habits and weakness for the demon rum. See, here's old Uncle Tommy, who's going to show you how it's done.

As billions of dollars shift from education and infrastructure toward defense in our "homeland," as security forces both here and abroad become less and less broadly educated in anything other than martial science, it is interesting to ponder what money is going where in the now-no-longer "war on terror" (the Bush Administration renamed it "a global struggle against violent extremism," in case you're behind the times). The Chinese government recently contracted with a company in Boston for a healthy shipment of bomb-detecting machines with which to protect its rail system. Like the little match girl, we might wonder if that kind of machine couldn't serve us well too.

But alas, on American trains bewildered conductors have been instructed to look for heavily dressed, shifty-eyed muggles who act "suspiciously." Citizens are encouraged to follow their gut: "If you see something, say something." And so buildings are emptied, roads blocked, subways stopped based on Roswellian sightings of Evildoers. In New York City five innocent tourists with British accents were handcuffed and Broadway cordoned off for hours because a tour bus operator had been advised that "stuffed pockets" were a sign of suicide bombers. In the subway every twelfth passenger is asked to open purse, packages and backpack. People call into radio programs demanding more racial profiling—of races "other" than themselves. New Yorkers call for profiling anyone who appears "Asian!" "Arab!" "Muslim!"—broad terms in a city where 100 percent of the population could "appear" to be one or some combination of the above.

So here we are: 100 percent of New Yorkers suspicious of everyone else, startled as jack rabbits, shaken by official mandates to report big bags, unfriendly glances and people who look lost. What more perfect way to tie up a city. Indeed, on a daily basis, false alarms clog traffic, empty theaters and halt industry. This to my mind is not "an abundance of caution" but the very definition of "irrational fear." This unmoored panic is so sadly disconnected from the destructive potential of determined saboteurs, those operatives who will always find ways to be ninth, tenth and eleventh rather than twelfth, or to "appear" un-Asian, un-Arab and un-Muslim in ways that play against our racialized cultural perceptions. If the tragic execution of a Brazilian electrician who "looked Asian"—an act apparently enabled by Britain's new policy of shooting-to-kill terrorism "suspects"—has taught us nothing else, it ought to have been the folly of appearance-based assumptions about criminality. Yet as I write, the head of Boston's transit system is announcing that you can tell a person who is sweating nervously from someone who is sweating because of the heat. It is a hundred degrees in Boston at the moment. We have become a house divided against itself.

Security experts must know that neither bag searches nor racial profiling can protect subways efficiently or at all. But there are better options: Where are the teams of bomb-sniffing dogs that should have been in our subways long ago? Is Homeland Security shopping for any of those machines the Chinese have had such perspicacity to buy in bulk?

In the meantime I suggest that we all log on and track Tommy Thompson as he goes about his business, particularly that business in the boardroom of Verichip. It could be a new reality game. MapQuest meets *Where's Waldo*. Tommycam.com. We could track him yawning, scratching his belly, missing his mouth with his fork; follow him up and down the aisles of Wal-Mart, average the time he lingers at this or that counter, calculate the time he spends in his car divided by distances traveled. Even better, we can make him the national fair average for model American males.

If Iowa is the midlevel American accent, Where Tommy Goes will be the template for our new American Standard for unsuspicion. Like a credit card, if he wanders out of his normal range of perambulation, the computer can home right in on him and make sure he isn't being kidnapped. It's for his own good, of course. We will be able to follow him into the bedroom, the bathroom and the doctor's office. Our teenage sons will acquire the cheat sheets for intimate moments found by savvy hackers who will happily sell them online at a bargain. What Tommy Wears will be the measure of whether our own coats are too heavy, given the warmth of the weather. The contents of Tommy's Backpack will of course always be public knowledge—he's got nothing to hide!—and mothers will plan their children's box lunches according to whether he packs liverwurst or a BLT. He might want to make sure he always carries a condom in his wallet, so he can set a public example for Safe Sex. Inquiring minds will want to know.

It's only fair, I think: If we're going to have a society surveilled 24/7, let's begin at the top. ■

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ERIC ALTERMAN

The *Times*, It Is A-Ragin'

To anyone paying attention, it ought to be obvious that the conservative caricature of the *New York Times* as a hotbed of liberal agitation is just too good to be true. Even though employees of the *Times*, like most urban professionals, are likely social liberals, this is offset by their commitment to objectivity and professionalism, coupled with a similar—though largely unremarked-upon—class bias toward a relatively conservative, business-friendly outlook on economic issues. (Wishing to offer advertisers a friendly environment does not lead in the direction of economic populism either.) Add to this its reporters' and editors' establishment-bred inability to disbelieve Bush Administration lies, no matter how frequently or brazenly offered, and the *Times* news pages frequently end up tilting rightward.

What lies behind the right-wing attacks, aside from a certain fanaticism among the assailants, is what *Weekly Standard* senior writer Matt Labash termed the right's "cottage industry" or "great little racket," in which "the conservative media like to rap the liberal media on the knuckles for not being objective.... It's a great way to have your cake and eat it, too."

Under relentless pressure from the Limbaughs, O'Reillys and Scarboroughs of the world—as well as the right-wing blogosphere, the Murdoch empire, the Republican National Committee, etc.—the *machers* who run the *Times* are concerned that their brand of reality-based reporting is increasingly out of step with faith-based red America. Op-ed columnist Nicholas Kristof wrote that the paper suffers from a "failure to hire more red state evangelicals." A recent "credibility" committee formed in the wake of the Blair and WMD scandals somehow resulted in a meeting, written up by Todd Gitlin in *The American Prospect*, in which one editor suggested an affirmative-action program for conservatives. And following the committee's report, executive editor Bill Keller sent the staff a memo urging reporters and editors to "stretch beyond our predominantly urban, culturally liberal orientation."

Even before the committee was convened, however, some reporters and editors had started taking matters into their own hands. But instead of "stretching" toward conservatives, they started stabbing at liberals—launching a fusillade of furious (and largely gratuitous) attacks on these apparently alien creatures. It's almost as if a secret *Times* directive had agreed to release reporters from typical standards of evidence if it would help to shake the paper's dreaded "liberal" label. Some examples:

§ On the news pages, then–political reporter now op-ed columnist John Tierney told of stationing himself outside the storied Upper West Side food store Zabar's during the GOP convention to ask shoppers—presumably liberal by location—if they had "re-examined their conscience" (for what, he did not explain).

§ In the magazine, Michael Ignatieff complained of "the withdrawal of American liberalism from the defense and promotion of freedom overseas," as well as the alleged conquest of "the Democratic Party's heart" by "the Michael Moore–style left."

§ In the Book Review, *Slate* editor Jacob Weisberg complained that author Graydon Carter offered a "free pass" to "Michael Moore, Joe Conason, Eric Alterman, Sidney Blumenthal," which "calls into question his choice of targets like Thomas Friedman, Andrew Sullivan and my colleague Mickey Kaus, shrewder commentators with whom he simply disagrees." Weisberg's review also deemed MSNBC's prewar cancellation of Phil Donahue's liberal talk show—its highest-rated program at the time—a matter of economics, not politics, despite well-publicized internal NBC memos indicating otherwise.

§ On the op-ed page, Thomas Friedman, sounding like a mind-reading Joe McCarthy, explained, "Liberals don't want to talk about Iraq because...deep down [they] don't want the Bush team to succeed."

§ In one op-ed column Nicholas Kristof explained, "These days, the biggest risk may come from the small but growing contingent on the left that wants to bring our troops home now." In another, he complained of the "liberal tendency in America to blame ourselves for Africa's problems."

§ In a forthcoming Book Review essay, conservative jurist Richard Posner spends more than 4,600 words beating the anti-liberal drum (again attacking yours truly).

What all these examples have in common is the absence of evidence for their accusations, much less a response from those under attack. Friedman, for instance, comes pretty close to accusing liberals of rooting for the enemy yet can't be bothered to name a single person to whom this heinous charge applies. Ditto Kristof. Did he lack space to name one liberal who blames America for Africa's woes? And why were Weisberg's more conservative writers so much "shrewder" than we liberals? Moreover, just what do the publications of three careful journalists, who write heavily footnoted works of reporting and scholarship, have do to with the entertaining agitprop of Michael Moore? In the words of Ricky Ricardo, "Splain, please." Meanwhile, Posner bases his argument on inaccurate data and discredited works by the likes of Bernard Goldberg and L. Brent Bozell, never once defining what he means by "liberal newspaper or television news channel."

Some of these charges are almost comical. How could it possibly be, *pace* Kristof, that liberals are the "biggest risk" to US policy in Iraq or indeed to anything, anywhere? We don't even control *The New Republic* anymore, much less Bush's National Security Council, the Pentagon or the CIA. Tierney described the Upper West Side as "the neighborhood that has called itself 'the conscience of the nation.'" This is not only false but theoretically impossible. Neighborhoods do not call themselves anything. They lack the power of speech, for starters.

So why do such baseless attacks on liberals make it through the *Times* editorial process? Did we put Jayson Blair's fictions on the front page? Did we instruct Judith Miller to channel Cheney and Chalabi in her WMD reporting? As a liberal, I have no doubt we're guilty...of *something*. ■

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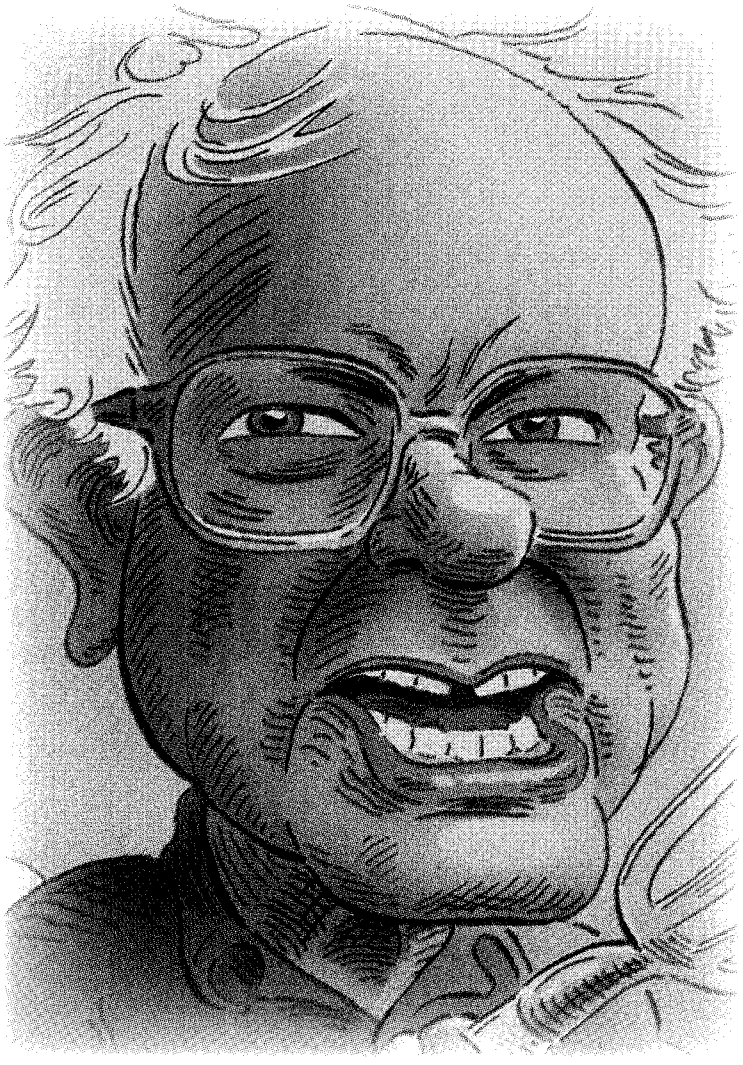
ARTICLES

BEING LIKE BERNIE

WHAT DEMOCRATS CAN LEARN FROM SANDERS-STYLE POPULISM



by JOHN NICHOLS

American flags had been hung from the white colonial houses that line the main drag of tiny Warren, Vermont, and the color guard, the marching units and the floats that would participate in the community's fifty-seventh annual Fourth of July parade had lined up just beyond the covered bridge. At the appointed hour, the local fife and drum corps played "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," an ancient cannon was fired and the parade stepped off—fire trucks sounding their sirens and children in bib overalls dancing with hoes. In the thick of it, behind the World War II jeep and ahead of the Rotarians, was a white-haired, 63-year-old native New Yorker who is the most prominent democratic socialist in America. Dressed in khaki pants and a button-down shirt, Bernie Sanders, now in his eighth term in Congress, marched without a cadre of aides handing out literature, without any signs to draw attention his way, without so much as a campaign pin or a bumper sticker identifying him as a candidate for the state's open Senate seat in 2006. The "minority of one" member of Congress who sits in the House as neither a Democrat nor a Republican did not require any introduction. As he came into view, waving his arm and calling out hellos, spontaneous and sustained applause erupted from Vermonters, who shouted, "Give 'em hell, Bernie!" and, again and again, "Senator Sanders!"

"It's mind-boggling how popular Bernie is. And it's not just progressives. People who tell you they have no interest in politics, who tell you they don't trust any politicians, are the ones who love Bernie the most," says Margrete Strand, who several years ago watched Sanders up close while she was running a campaign for a Democratic Senate candidate who lost (Sanders won his House seat by a landslide). Polls consistently identify Sanders as the most popular politician in the state, and election results confirm the survey research: He was re-elected in 2004 with more than two-thirds of the vote against a well-funded Republican challenger, sweeping not just his traditional base in Burlington but the vast majority of the state's 251 rural towns. Now, with the decision of Republican-turned-independent Vermont Senator Jim Jeffords to step down, Sanders is the clear front-runner to win one of the few US Senate seats next year where no incumbent is running. True, he will still have to deal with the multimillion-dollar GOP attack campaign that is certain to target him, but with top Republicans backing away from the race, Democrats getting in line behind his candidacy—sometimes grudgingly, sometimes not—and polls showing him running 2 to 1 ahead of likely foes, he seems well positioned to make those calls of "Senator Sanders" official.

Even if he were not a socialist, and even if he were not an independent who eschews most of the trappings of contemporary partisan politics—including those of a Democratic Party he sees as dramatically too centrist, too cautious and too unfocused to counter the country's drift to the right—the enthusiasm Sanders inspires would be remarkable. That he attracts the support he does with what are generally portrayed as career-crushing liabilities in American politics has made his Senate campaign the subject of a good deal of fascination among progressives looking for a successful model in an era when too many Democrats seem to think the only way to win is by trimming their sails. When the question of the moment is, What's the matter with Kansas? it's no surprise that Democrats want to know how Sanders wins tough races in an overwhelmingly rural state by drawing the enthusiastic support

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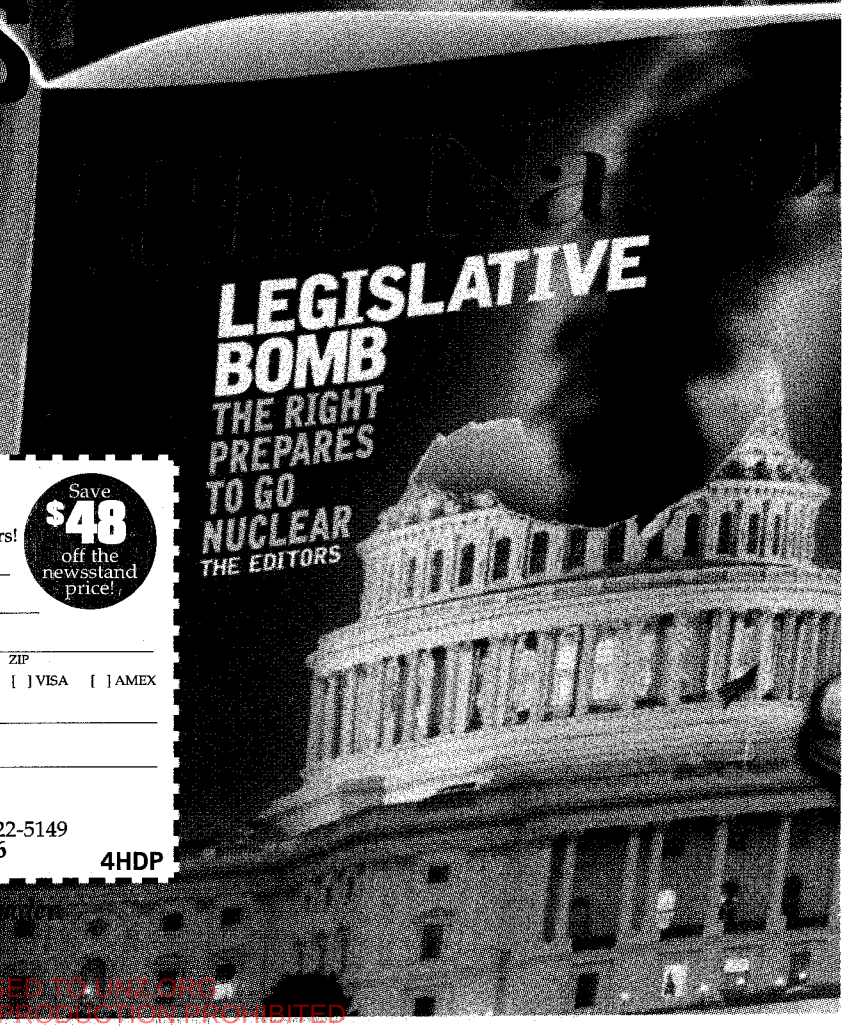

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of precisely the sort of white working-class voters Democrats have had such a hard time hanging on to in recent elections.

Unfortunately, Sanders is not peddling easy fixes. What he has to teach is not a new scheme for organizing a campaign or raising money. There's no Bernie Sanders gimmick. Rather, Sanders offers confirmation of a fundamental reality that too many progressive pols have forgotten: An ideologically muscular message delivered in a manner that crosses lines of class, region and partisanship is still the best strategy. "Bernie earned people's trust over a long period of time by taking strong stands and sticking to them," says Peter Freyne, a columnist for Burlington's weekly newspaper, *Seven Days*. "There's a connection between what the politician says and what the politician does. And it's always there. The consistency of where he's coming from and who he's looking out for has been there since I started covering him in 1981."

'I used to be a diehard Republican. Now, I'm a diehard for Bernie.'
—Warren, Vermont, attorney Mark Grosby

There is nothing cautious about Sanders's politics: He opposes the war in Iraq, he is an outspoken critic of the Patriot Act, he condemns corporations and he maintains a lonely faith that government really can do a lot of things—like guarantee healthcare for all—better than the private sector. Nor is there anything smooth or prepackaged or focus-group tested about the way he communicates. After almost thirty-five years of close to constant campaigning, first as the gadfly candidate of the left-wing Liberty Union Party for senator and governor in the 1970s, then as the radical mayor of "The People's Republic of Burlington" in the 1980s and, since 1990, as the only independent in modern history to repeatedly win a US House seat, Sanders has forged relationships with generations of Vermont voters, many of whom echo the sentiments of Warren attorney Mark Grosby, who says, "I used to be a diehard Republican. Now, I'm a diehard for Bernie."

And, invariably, the connection was forged in a conversation about economics. To a greater extent, arguably, than any other progressive politician in the country, Sanders is identified with pocketbook issues. Spending a day with him in the small towns of Vermont is the equivalent of signing up for a walking seminar on the real-life struggles of working Americans—as played out on issues ranging from protecting Social Security, retirement plans and Medicare to expanding access to healthcare, lowering drug prices, raising the minimum wage, helping small businesses get started and keeping family farmers on the land. The conversations are a mix of personal anecdotes and broad-sweep policies, always pulled back by the Congressman to a discussion of the perils of corporate power and lobbying. To be sure, Sanders takes questions about the war in Iraq and other issues, but the breadth and depth of the discussions he gets into regarding the kitchen-table concerns of working Vermonters is remarkable.

At a picnic on the village green in Rochester, a central Vermont community of 1,200, 84-year-old Ethel Kingsbury, whose family has owned the same farm since 1794, responds to a question about whether she likes Sanders by narrowing her eyes and exclaiming, "Like him? I love him! I'm worried about these prescription prices. This drug bit is just out of control. Bernie's the only one on our side in this whole mess." That sense that "Bernie's on our side" on the economic issues has provided the Congressman with a following even among Vermonters not so comfortable with his opposition to the war or his ardent support of reproductive freedom and gay rights.

"Democrats are not as engaged as they should be on the economic issues that face tens and tens of millions of people," says Sanders. "That's what the Republicans have been playing off. The Republicans jump in and say, 'OK, look. Democrats are not talking about your economic issues. We're not either, but at least we're telling you about the Ten Commandments, we're telling you about abortion, we're telling you about gay rights.' The biggest mistake Democrats make is to take economics off the table."

Sanders keeps issues of economics and corporate power on the table by using his Congressional franking privileges to send out newsletters that, rather than featuring self-serving photos and pronouncements, offer easily accessible tutorials on the damage done to workers, farmers and the environment by free-trade policies, the threat to democracy posed by media consolidation and the workings of a single-payer healthcare system. Every year, Sanders holds single-issue town hall meetings in some of the smallest communities in the state, where he brings in experts on poverty, healthcare reform and other issues for discussions that can run deep into the evening. The crowds are big, often packing the halls. People get to complain. But they also get something else—an alternative view on how the economy of the country and the world might be organized to favor their interests. This long-term, intensive education process is the closest thing to the "secret" of Sanders's success. Vermonters associate their Congressman with serious discussions about complicated issues, and they understand where he's coming from—and that allows Sanders to go places most politicians fear to tread.

Indeed, it is when Sanders edges toward the middle that he feels the most heat. When Sanders backed President Clinton's decision to order the bombing of the former Yugoslavia, anti-war activists occupied the Congressman's Burlington office, and one of his aides resigned. Most of those tensions died down a few years later, when Sanders emerged as one of the House's most outspoken critics of the Bush Administration's rush to war in Iraq. But there is still some complaining on this score from his old Liberty Union Party allies, just as some social liberals quietly grumble that Sanders maintains too rigid a focus on economic issues. "Sometimes, Bernie's biggest critics are on the left," explains Liz Blum, an activist with the Vermont Progressive Party and a former member of the Select Board of the town of Norwich. "Some people are uncomfortable when they see a yard where there are signs for the Republicans and for Bernie, but I see that as evidence that he has figured out how to talk to people that the Democrats just have not been able to reach."

At his best, Sanders succeeds in separating policy from politics and getting to those deeper discussions about the role

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government can and should play in solving real-life problems—discussions that are usually obscured by partisan maneuvering. That's the genius of Sanders's independent status. But it is also a source of frustration. While Sanders backers formed the Vermont Progressive Party, a third-party grouping that holds six seats in the State Legislature, he has never joined the party and has sometimes been slow to embrace its statewide campaigns. While the sense that Sanders is a genuinely free agent serves him well, it raises questions about whether Sanders will ever create not just an alternative candidacy but an alternative politics in his state. "He will not leave a party behind him. So what will be his legacy?" asks Freyne of *Seven Days*. "I don't see a next Bernie on the horizon. I don't see what comes after him. There's a lot wrapped up in one man, and I don't know where that gets you in the long run."

'There's a lot wrapped up in one man, and I don't know where that gets you in the long run.' —Burlington columnist Peter Freyne

But Sanders makes no apologies for refusing to be a party man. Yes, of course, he'd like the Democratic Party to be more progressive and for third parties to develop the capacity to pull the political process to the left. But Sanders is not going to wait for the right political moment to arrive. What he's done is create a model for how an individual candidate can push beyond the narrow boundaries of contemporary politics and connect with voters in the same sense that Progressives and Populists of a century ago—operating within the shells of the Democratic and Republican parties and sometimes outside them—did so successfully.

This willingness to play with whatever political cards he is dealt has made Sanders an unexpectedly effective Congressman. In June he successfully forged a left-right coalition in the House to deal the Bush Administration a significant setback—attaching an amendment to a Justice Department appropriations bill that zeroed out funding for the use of the Patriot Act to spy on library and bookstore records. The vote, which saw most Democrats and dozens of conservative Republicans break with the White House, inspired a rare threat by George W. Bush to veto the entire appropriations bill. A few weeks later, when the House voted to reauthorize the Patriot Act, rules committee Republicans blocked a Sanders amendment on the issue from coming to a vote—knowing that it would pass—but a bipartisan group of senators may yet attach it to the act.

It is not only on civil liberties that Sanders is a master at forging unlikely coalitions. Right-wingers like North Carolina Republican Walter Jones are regular Sanders allies on issues as diverse as trade policy, foreign investment and, recently, setting a timetable for getting US troops out of Iraq. "I suppose some people think it's strange that I work so well with a liberal," Jones said on a recent afternoon, wrapping his arm around Sanders's shoulders as the two men shared a seat on the underground train that connects the Rayburn Office Building with the Capitol. (Informed that Sanders identifies himself as a "socialist," Jones smiled. "I know. I was trying to be polite.") "You can disagree with someone 98 percent of the time, but if you can find the 2 percent where you agree and get together, that's what matters," Jones explained. "Bernie understands that better than some of the Democrats do."

Sanders says that if he makes it to the Senate he'll continue building unlikely alliances. "In the sense that we are trying to develop left-right coalitions, we are also trying to redefine American politics," Sanders declares. "You have the trade issue, which is very, very important to people who are worried about losing their jobs. You have healthcare issues, which are very important. You have war and peace issues, economic priority issues, which are very important when we talk about how this country is going to pay for all our domestic needs. And on those issues you can bring together coalitions that redefine the 'normal' paradigm that a lot of the corporate media create when they talk about liberal and conservative."

The extent to which Sanders has redefined the paradigm in Vermont has emerged as a fundamental factor in the Senate race. Democrats have essentially backed off the race; Sanders's old nemesis, former Governor Howard Dean, now the Democratic National Committee chair, says, "A victory for Bernie Sanders is a win for Democrats," while most of the party's prominent players in the state have endorsed him. The party line on the November 2006 ballot is unlikely to be filled by anyone but a nuisance candidate and might even go blank. Republicans have been struggling to identify a top-tier candidate since Governor Jim Douglas, a moderate who was courted by the White House, stood down. They'll have a nominee, however, perhaps conservative Lieutenant Governor Brian Dubie or millionaire businessman Richard Tarrant, and the Republican candidate will have all the money he needs to mount a serious challenge to Sanders.

That campaign will be nasty and personal; already Republicans have tried, without much success, to stir up a controversy about the fact that Sanders's House re-election committee paid the candidate's wife, Jane O'Meara Sanders, a veteran activist and political consultant, to help run his campaigns. At least, Sanders notes, his status as the country's best-known "out" socialist means "it'll be hard to redbait me." To counter the GOP attacks that do come, Sanders expects he'll have to raise $5 million—after years in which "the most money I have ever raised in an election is $800,000 or $900,000." Sanders says most of that money will be used not for television ads but for grassroots organizing.

Sanders will offer no gimmicks, no easy answers or quick fixes—just an unyielding faith that people want to talk about the issues that matter in their lives. "Maybe that's the lesson of Bernie," says Margrete Strand, who saw Sanders in action years ago. "He doesn't worry so much about winning one election. He's in it for the long haul, because that's how you build the awareness and the trust that allows you to get beyond the spin and talk to people about the real issues in their lives. I don't know if the Democrats have the patience to do that. But if they want to get through to the people they need to reach, they should be paying attention." ■

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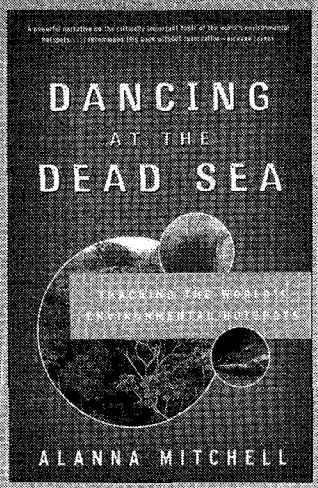

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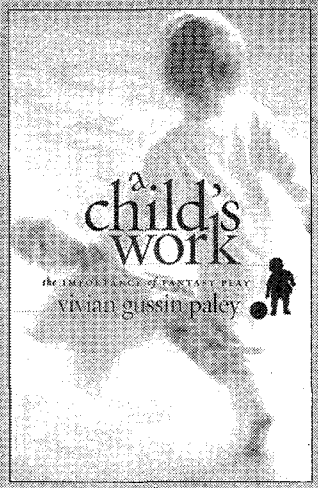

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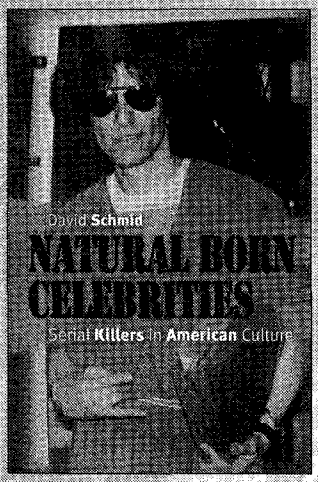

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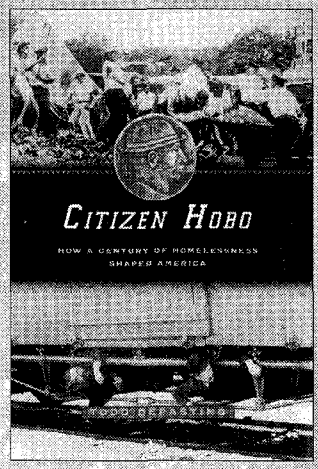

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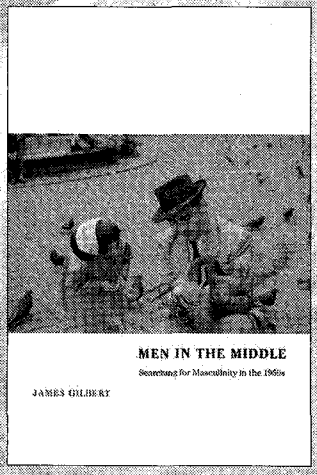

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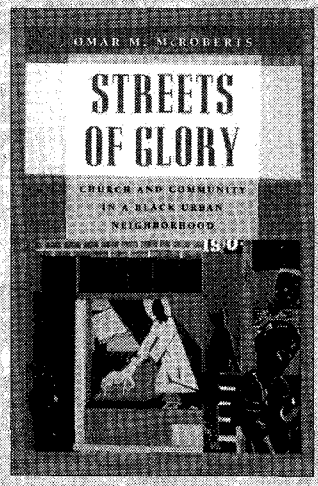

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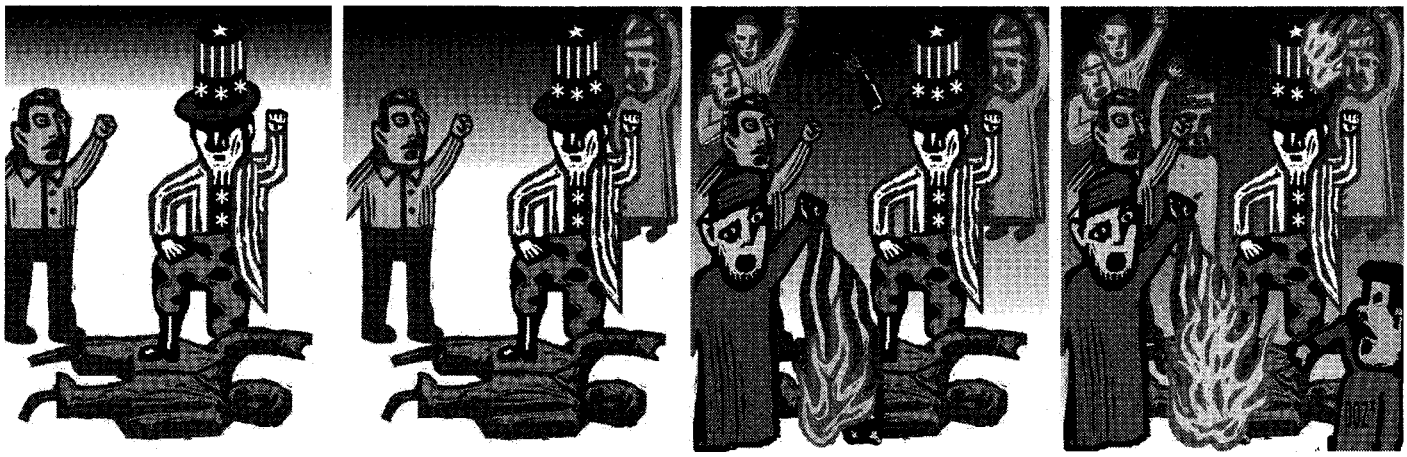

PETER O. ZIERLEIN

Unintended Consequences: A Forum on Iraq and the Mideast

With its war in Iraq and its talk of promoting democracy, the Bush Administration has begun to transform the Middle East—but not always in ways it may have intended. We have asked four leading experts on the Middle East to offer their assessments of the consequences of the Administration's policies for the region and for America's standing within it. The four are: Helena Cobban, who writes the weblog JustWorldNews *and is a columnist for the* Christian Science Monitor *and* Al-Hayat *(London); Juan Cole, a professor of history at the University of Michigan, who writes the weblog* Informed Comment*; Nir Rosen, a fellow at the New America Foundation, who is completing a book on the Iraq War; and Shibley Telhami, Anwar Sadat Professor for Peace and Development at the University of Maryland.* —*The Editors*

Q *Wars often have unintended consequences. How has the Iraq War affected the political landscape of the region and America's standing therein?*

Cobban: The war has obviously pushed more people in the region further into the anti-American camp. This includes many of the area's democrats and moderates—the kind of people who would previously have been prepared to give Washington a chance. It has also undermined the longer-term strategic objectives the Bush Administration seems to have had in mind. There is enough documentary evidence to conclude that Bush and Cheney wanted to establish a solidly pro-US regime in Iraq that would provide basing rights for the US military for decades to come. That position would then enable Washington to threaten military action against both Iran and Syria. But as a result of the insurgency, Washington lacks the capability to utter a credible threat against Iran or Syria—other than possibly some small-scale "needling" operations.

Cole: Helena is correct that the Iraq War has propelled negative feelings toward the United States—not just in the immediate region but throughout the Muslim world. Between the summer of 2002 and spring of 2003, the number of Indonesians who viewed the US favorably fell from 61 percent to 15 percent, according to the Pew Research Center. Although Muslims already faulted the United States for lack of evenhandedness on the Arab-Israeli dispute, in recent years their estimation of the US has plummeted. According to Zogby, from summer 2002 to summer 2004, those who viewed the US favorably in Egypt fell from 15 to 2 percent. And respondents generally believed that Iraqis were worse off under American occupation.

Another consequence of the war has been that more Sunnis in Iraq and elsewhere are turning away from Arab nationalism, which has been discredited, to Salafi revivalism, a very conservative form of Islam. Although most Salafis are "quietists," in that they do not enter into ordinary politics, they are also the recruitment pool for radical groups. It has also strengthened Iran's position in the region. In 1982 Ayatollah Khomeini created the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq for Shiite expatriate groups, whose members included Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, the current SCIRI leader, and Ibrahim al-Jaafari, Iraq's current Prime Minister. Khomeini dreamed of putting them in power in Baghdad. Bush and Rumsfeld have fulfilled that dream.

Rosen: Instead of creating a democracy, we have replaced one dictatorship with another that is growing increasingly abusive and that is settling scores with the Sunni class. That and the chaos the war has created have given the dictatorships of the region a powerful argument against regime change, since nobody wants to live in Iraq, and it is better to have any government than to live in the hell that Iraq has become. Equally worrying, Iraq has con-

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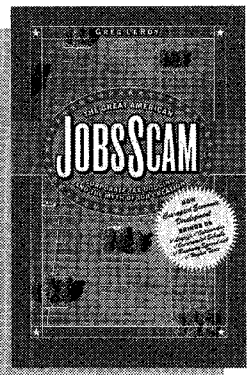
vinced *many* Muslims around the world that the United States, and perhaps the West, is their enemy. It has made the "clash of civilizations," a previously absurd and baseless theory, closer to a reality. It has united Islamist movements around the world with a common bond of feeling oppressed at the hands of the United States and its allies. In Falluja, I found men fighting in honor of slain Palestinian leader Sheik Ahmed Yassin. In Saudi Arabia, Al Qaeda fighters who killed foreign workers have named their group after Falluja. And even in Mogadishu, Somalia, there are now shops named in honor of Hamas and Falluja.

Telhami: No one in Washington would have imagined that with all the human and financial costs of the war, the United States would find itself supporting a government headed by an Islamist, Mr. Jaafari, whose power is dependent on the blessing of a most influential clergyman, Ayatollah Sistani—a government that has close ties to Iran and that would conclude a military agreement with Tehran for the training of Iraqi forces, even as nearly 140,000 US troops remained on Iraqi soil. Nor would they have imagined the broader strategic consequences of the war to which Helena alluded: that Iraq would become the new breeding ground for Al Qaeda and for those who share its aims and methods; that in the Middle East and in much of the world, the United States would be perceived to be weaker in the short term than it was before the war; that its leverage vis-à-vis states like Iran and North Korea would have been reduced because US forces are stretched too thin in Iraq; and that because of the difficulties in Iraq, the United States would need others in the international community more, including governments it is trying to influence, such as those in Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

Q *Much of the American political class remains obsessed with Islamic radicalism and terrorism. Yet even with the Administration's gift of the invasion of Iraq and the terrorism it has helped generate, it is not clear how much ground, if any, bin Ladenism has gained in the region since 9/11. How serious is the threat today?*

Cole: Political Islam remains important, but radical fundamentalism devoted to terrorism against the US is widely in decline, with the single exception of US-dominated Iraq. One must distinguish Muslim political parties like Dawa in Iraq or the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, which will peacefully contest elections, from radical Sunni fundamentalist groups like Al Qaeda or Algeria's Armed Islamic Group. The fundamentalist movements that aimed at violently seizing power were strongest in the 1990s in Algeria, Egypt, Sudan, Gaza, Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan. Everywhere they have been largely defeated. The Algerian civil war of the 1990s left the secular-leaning government victorious over the Armed Islamic Group. The Mubarak regime in Egypt jailed some 30,000 radicals and killed 1,500 in running street battles, devastating them. The military government in Sudan broke with Hassan Turabi and his radical fundamentalists. Saudi Arabia, after long underestimating the danger, has now moved effectively against Al Qaeda. Al Qaeda never had significant popularity in most of Afghanistan and is in great disarray.

Rosen: The threat today is more serious than it was before the war in Iraq but hardly the principal challenge some say it is. Jihadi movements in different countries are now more likely to identify with one another, because they feel commonly perse-



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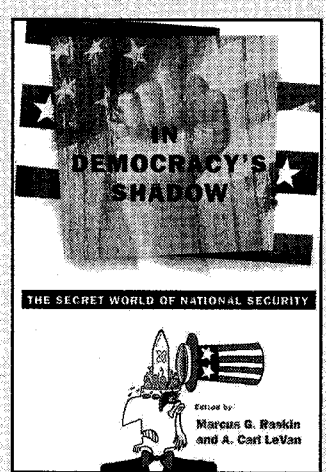

IN DEMOCRACY'S SHADOW

The essays in this collection trace the security measures implemented since 9/11 to their roots in the cold war, documenting how secrecy, an unaccountable bureaucracy and global expansionism jeopardize American democracy. **Edited by Marcus Raskin and A. Carl LeVan** with essays by Gar Alperovitz & Kai Bird, Norman Mailer, Norman Birnbaum, Richard Falk, Seymour Melman, Anna Nelson, William Blum and others.

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cuted. But if the US ceased its attacks on Muslim populations and was seen as a more just international actor, most movements would lose much of their recruiting base. Al Qaeda initially sought to expel the US from Saudi Arabia, and now it has been able to make the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan its cause as well. Though there are elements in the jihadi universe who are motivated purely by hate and the desire for war, the principal cause of jihadi extremism is American policy in the Muslim world.

Telhami: I believe that Al Qaeda and its allies remain a major threat. While it cares about Islamic issues such as the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and Iraq, it is hard to imagine that any realistic and fair outcome of these issues would satisfy its aspirations. In that sense the conflict with this group is zero-sum, and that makes it very dangerous.

But the mistake made in the approach to terrorism is not in characterizing Al Qaeda. It is in realizing that the fight against Al Qaeda requires a strategy toward the majority of Muslims who are not allies of Al Qaeda but who have come to dislike the United States even more than they fear Al Qaeda. This is the danger, and one can see it from public opinion surveys I have been conducting (with Zogby International) in a number of Arab countries. Particularly troubling is the public's view of American intentions. That the vast majorities think the primary US objectives in Iraq are controlling oil and helping Israel is not new. What is distressing is that majorities now add to oil and Israel the belief that the US intention is "to weaken the Muslim world." This may be in part responsible for the rise of what I call "Islamic nationalism." In 2004 "Islamic identity" trumped "Arab identity" and identification with the state in four of the six countries I surveyed. This does not appear to be as much a rise in puritanical religious belief as it is in Islamic nationalism. For example, when asked if they supported women working outside the house, majorities in every single country stated that they supported women working either always or when economically needed. When asked whom among world leaders they admired most, none of the religious fundamentalists made the top three. In fact, the top-two vote getters were the late pan-Arab Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser and French President Jacques Chirac, most probably because of their perceived defiance of the United States.

'There has been...a considerable hyping of the "terrorist threat" in order to keep Americans in a state of fearfulness.' —Helena Cobban

But unfortunately, Osama bin Laden still has his supporters and appears on the list of top five in several countries. The real danger these findings suggest is not only in bin Laden's ability to recruit but also in reducing the incentive for others to fight him. If the war on bin Laden is perceived to be primarily a war between the United States and Al Qaeda, even those who reject Al Qaeda's ways may not be rooting for the US—let alone be willing to actively cooperate with us.

Cobban: There has been, in my opinion, a considerable hyping of the "terrorist threat" in order to keep Americans in a state of fearfulness. Accusing one's political opponents of being "terrorists" whose claims and movements "we" in the "civilized world" cannot therefore afford to engage politically is an old rhetorical device used to uneven effect by numerous colonial regimes over the decades. In apartheid South Africa, let's remember, the regime used its claim that the ANC was merely a bunch of "terrs" (as they called them) to justify its policies of refusing to talk to the ANC and of conducting an aggressive war against it and its supporters. But finally, after three decades, reason prevailed, and the bosses of apartheid decided that just possibly it might be worthwhile to negotiate with the ANC—even as the ANC continued attacks on both white and black civilians within South Africa.

We need to be able to confront today's anti-"terrorist" propaganda with this history in mind. We need to stand on the solid principle that all politically motivated actions that harm noncombatants—whether undertaken by governments, militias or shadowy underground networks—are equally deplorable. We need to shift the discourse from one of "terrorism/antiterrorism" to one of strict respect by all sides for international humanitarian law. In that way, the claims raised by groups now labeled "terrorist" can be considered on their own political merits. Some of these claims have some merit and should be engaged. Some have none at all.

Q One of the unintended consequences of the war has been to deepen or sharpen the Shiite-Sunni divide. The establishment of a Shiite-dominated government in Baghdad seems to have revived fears among the Sunni elite of an Iranian-led Shiite crescent in the Middle East that would upset the political balance in their own societies. Is there a danger of larger regional conflict along sectarian lines?

Telhami: There's no question that in Iraq today there is a Shiite-Sunni divide and that this divide is consequential for regional politics broadly, including in the Gulf states, such as Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, that have significant Shiite communities. It has to be said at the outset, however, that while the insurgency is primarily Sunni Arab, it has had some Sunni Kurdish and some Shiite elements. Even when Saddam Hussein ruled, many of his subordinates were Shiite. In fact, the majority on the fifty-five "most wanted" deck of cards were Shiite, not Sunni.

Moreover, the sectarian issue is only part of the story. The other part is a genuine strategic concern in the Arab Gulf states about Iranian power. Many in the Gulf have traditionally seen Iraq as the only state in the region capable in the long term of balancing Iranian dominance. But Iraq is not in the short term capable of balancing anyone, even if its government were Sunni. And their fear is that their strategic worries in this regard may be exacerbated by the sectarian issue: that a Shiite-dominated government in Iraq may be inclined to become Iran's friend or, even worse, client. While many of these fears are exaggerated (for one thing, Iraqi Shiites are Iraqi and Arab as much as Shiite), there is much strategic uncertainty as well as confusion in the Gulf region about the best policies to pursue in this environment.

Cole: The war has, as King Abdullah II of Jordan pointed out rather too breathlessly, greatly strengthened the Shiites, including Iran and Hezbollah, but also smaller Gulf communities such as those in Saudi Arabia's oil region and in Bahrain. When the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq, of Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, and the Dawa Party, of

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Ibrahim al-Jaafari, won the January 30 elections, and when the religious parties swept to power in the nine southern provinces and Baghdad, Tehran gained key political allies. There is now a de facto Baghdad-Tehran axis. The current governments are now making plans for joint oil pipelines, loans, investment and cooperation in the pilgrimage trade. Many Iraqi Shiites support the Lebanese Hezbollah, which in the medium term will almost certainly benefit from the support of wealthy Iraqi Shiites. Bahraini and Saudi Shiites have become more assertive, given their new allies in Baghdad.

That said, the Shiite revival in the eastern Arab world is unlikely to result in regional wars in and of itself. But if Iraq fell into civil war between Sunnis and Shiites, the Saudis and Jordanians would certainly take the side of the Sunnis, while Iran would support the Shiites.

Rosen: I do not believe there is a Shiite crescent in geopolitical terms for Iran to lead, because Iraq's Shiites are Iraqis first and Shiites second and do not look to Iran for leadership, although some of the current leaders have close ties to Iran. Rather, the danger lies in the sectarianism that the Iraq War has increased. In Iraq the gulf between Arabs and Turkmen on one side and the Kurds on the other is unbridgeable. Antipathy between Sunnis and Shiites is extremely virulent, and some cleansing of Sunnis from Shiite areas and Shiites from Sunni areas is inevitable. Syria is descending into sectarian conflict between Kurds and Arabs but also soon between the minority Alawis, who rule, and the majority Sunnis, represented by the Muslim Brotherhood. In Lebanon the divide between Sunnis, Christians, Shiites and Druse is the widest it has been since the 1989 Taif peace accords, and radical Sunni Islam has been gaining in strength as well.

'The Bush Administration's emphasis on foreign fighters is a distraction. The vast majority of the insurgents are Iraqis.' —Shibley Telhami

Cobban: The US authorities have done a lot, inside Iraq, to exacerbate the differences between Shiites and Sunnis, as between ethnic Arabs and ethnic Kurds. 'Twas ever thus with colonial ventures: Divide and rule. But Arab and Islamic societies still have many resources with which to manage these divisions and to prevent them from spiraling uncontrollably into civil war. To my certain knowledge, this is the case inside Iraq, as well as at the regional level. But, of course, an embattled US colonial power will continue to try to exacerbate the sectarian divisions.

Q *The Bush Administration is trying to place some of the blame for the insurgency in Iraq on Syria and Iran, arguing that they are not doing enough to stop foreign fighters from entering Iraq, and has even suggested that they may be aiding the insurgency. What role are Iraq's neighbors—including Saudi Arabia—playing in the Iraq War?*

Telhami: The Bush Administration's emphasis on foreign fighters is a distraction. The vast majority (more than 90 percent) of the insurgents are Iraqis. Most of the expected insurgents killed or taken into custody are Iraqis. There is no lack of skill in the methods of war among Iraqis, and we know that there are sufficient munitions that have gone missing from Iraqi stockpiles to last the insurgency for many years. So the primary threat to the US presence in Iraq today is local, not international, even if it is also true that Al Qaeda terrorists have taken root there.

Cole: The Administration's focus on Syria is invidious, since Sunni jihadists have infiltrated Iraq from Saudi Arabia and Jordan as well as Syria, and the Syrian border is probably impossible to police effectively. That the Alawi Shiite–dominated Syrian Baath Party would be eager to see the influence of radical Sunni fundamentalism grow on its borders is not plausible. The Syrians might be more effective in policing their borders if they were not afraid that the US would overthrow them if it were not tied down in Iraq. Practically speaking, reassuring Damascus on that score while pressing it to do a better job of intercepting the jihadis would be a better policy than simple saber-rattling.

Rosen: It is absurd to accuse Iran of supporting a Sunni anti-Shiite insurgency against the only Shiite state in the region and one whose leadership is composed of many former dissidents with ties to Iran. I would also add that many of the foreign fighters in Iraq have come from Saudi Arabia and Jordan, which also supply much of the ideology of the mujahedeen in Iraq. The radical form of Islam that is encouraged in Saudi Arabia and that it supports in the Muslim world, from Bosnia to Somalia to Afghanistan, is indeed a threat both to more moderate local traditions and to world peace. Key Salafi leaders have also come from Jordan, including Zarqawi and several of his spiritual advisers who provide the theological justifications for his movement.

Cobban: I find it rather ironic that the United States, which has no business being in Iraq, is concerned with the "interference" of Iraq's neighbors. Let's think for a moment. Which countries might have the most legitimate reasons to be concerned about the stability, well-being and general political orientation of the people of Iraq: its immediate neighbors—two of which have suffered in recent times from Iraqi aggression, and all of which have at least some populations with family and other fraternal links to Iraq—or a country 8,000 miles away, only a tiny proportion of whose citizens have any connection to Iraq at all?

Q *Supporters of the Bush Administration have tried to claim credit for what they see as the new stirring of democracy in many Arab societies. Others argue that the Administration's Greater Middle East Initiative has not gone anywhere because of Washington's legitimacy and credibility problems.*

Cobban: The Administration's adoption of the rhetoric of democratization is welcome. But Washington continues to support—and indeed makes its own use of—the repressive apparatuses of countries like Egypt and Jordan, which are used to punish internal political opposition. Democratization and a respect for human rights are closely connected. That is why we must stand for ending the use of violence in domestic political affairs. When we see Washington make that point in public, we'll know it is starting to get serious about "democratization." For now, most reformers in Arab societies are extremely wary of being tarred with an American brush—especially as long as the US is seen, as it still is, as essentially supporting Israel's colonial policies in the West Bank, and as long as the American occupa-

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tion of Iraq is seen as having led to chaos in that country.

Cole: Bush's military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq have not produced stable governments that anyone would want to copy. And both new governments have a distinctly Muslim fundamentalist coloration. The Administration's policies have actually strengthened the Iranian hard-liners while having little effect on other regimes in the region. Nothing that happened in Lebanon had anything to do with Bush or Iraq. The municipal elections in Saudi Arabia and the changes in electoral law in Egypt are purely cosmetic. It is a good thing for the US to support democracy in the region, but it has to be done wisely. The main effect of aggressive Bush Administration policy to date has been to spread instability and increase polarization.

Rosen: The US war in Iraq has encouraged "liberation movements" in the region, who now feel that there is a superpower that can give them an edge in their internal domestic struggles. But many of these movements have adopted sectarian or ethnic identities (for example, the Syrian Brotherhood and the Kurds in Syria). At the same time, new "Chalabis" are appearing, hoping to copy Iraqi opposition leader Ahmad Chalabi's success in orchestrating a war and regime change through public relations and lies. Syrian opposition figure Nizar Nayouf provided the media with documents detailing where Iraqi WMDs were allegedly being stored in Syria. And Syrian dissident Farid al-Ghadiri of the American-based Al Islah (Reform) Party had been imitating Chalabi's lobbying tactics. The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood is like the Iraqi Dawa Party, waiting on the sidelines and hoping for change, knowing that as soon as Syria's Baathists depart, the Sunni Muslim Brotherhood will easily take over. The overall effect of these new stirrings of democracy, then, has been to increase the potential for sectarian strife in a number of countries.

'The main effect of aggressive Bush Administration policy to date has been to spread instability and increase polarization.' —*Juan Cole*

Telhami: The war itself had mostly a negative impact on democracy in the region, but the subsequent advocacy of democracy has had a more positive effect on the region's politics. In general, because the Bush Administration gave this issue such a high profile, all those seeking good relations with the US had to offer something, if only for political reasons. Even those in the region who didn't believe the Administration meant it were happy to see the public pressure: When governments in the region are under scrutiny, the likelihood of an Arab Tiananmen Square is reduced. The Lebanese could go out in large numbers to test the resolve of Syrian and Lebanese forces. Opposition in Egypt has been emboldened. All this has resulted in more stirrings than we have seen in a long time. But profound change is hard to find anywhere.

In fact, Arab governments are assuming two things: First, that the Bush Administration is using the democracy issue to get them to cooperate on strategic issues such as Iraq, the war on Al Qaeda and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict; second, that the President, having made the issue a public priority, must now show some accomplishment. For this reason, their strategy is clear: Offer strategic cooperation and give enough evidence of change for the Administration to claim them as an example of success. Yet as soon as the President takes credit for a country as an example of success, they assume it will be very hard for him to move that country back to the negative column. Democracy cannot be seen to march backwards.

Q *The liberal community seems to be divided about what to do in Iraq, in particular over the issue of an American withdrawal. What is your view?*

Rosen: Every day the American occupation of Iraq continues, the crimes inherent in such an occupation continue. More innocent Iraqis will be wounded, killed, tortured or arrested. The Iraqi resistance will continue to have ready justification for its own violence and crimes, and the Iraqi government will continue to be perceived as a weak and illegitimate collaborator. The occupying powers must therefore promulgate a timetable for an expeditious withdrawal. Such an announcement would allow for Sunni participation in the political process and convince all Arab Iraqis that America is not in Iraq seeking the country's oil or permanent bases. The majority of the Iraqi resistance would have a strong incentive to pursue negotiations and lay down their weapons, because there would be no occupation to fight. They could unite with other Iraqis in opposing foreign radical Islamic movements, which would lose both a motivating factor and a major opportunity to engage in jihad. This is not to imply that all will end well. If the Americans leave, Iraqis may end up fighting one another before responsible religious, tribal and political leaders establish order, based on the strong sense of Iraqi nationalism among both Sunni and Shiite Iraqi Arabs. Either way it will take decades for the region to recover from the ill-fated and traumatic American adventure.

Cobban: I strongly agree that the US should withdraw its troops completely from Iraq, and as fast as is humanly possible. The troops have no right to be there, because their presence is the result of a war that was illegitimate under any reasonable reading of international law. Their presence there is doubly illegitimate because, in the postinvasion era, they have been used to buttress a US Administration inside Iraq that has disregarded the entire legal structure that regulates what is permissible during a military occupation. I am aware of the argument that a too-early US withdrawal may leave the country mired in civil war and that therefore Americans have some kind of "duty" to stay in Iraq to "make things right." I believe this argument is based on the completely false premise that the American presence has a stabilizing influence within the country. My reading of the situation there is that exactly the opposite is true.

Telhami: I find myself torn between the fear that rapid American withdrawal could bring about further anarchy and civil war and the worry that continued American presence will reduce the incentives of the local parties to move toward a lasting arrangement. On balance, I am now of the opinion that announcing a reasonable timetable (within eighteen months) for the beginning of American withdrawal is more good than bad. If the United States is taken out of the equation, the focus may be on Iraq. Al Qaeda, which is now capitalizing on the anti-American mood and on a genuine Iraqi insurgency, would

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have far fewer allies in Iraq. The best course of action would be to issue a challenge to the Iraqi government and to the Sunni population: If a constitutional deal is struck that attracts the majority of Sunni leadership and elections are held in which majorities of all major communities participate, the US would commit significant foreign aid directly to the Iraqi government over a period of ten years and would announce a timetable for withdrawal of forces.

Cole: The United States cannot resolve the problems in Iraq militarily, and its policies have made things progressively worse. The Iraqi government has no military and won't have an effective one for five to ten years. If the United States simply withdrew, Iraq might well fall into massive civil war. That war would, moreover, likely draw in the Turks, Iranians and Saudis. Consequent guerrilla sabotage of Iranian and Saudi petroleum production is not impossible and would risk deeply harming the world economy, especially the poor in the global South. The Iraq situation needs to be effectively internationalized, preferably by giving it a United Nations military command, like that in Cambodia in the early 1990s. Obviously, that step will not be taken by the Bush Administration, and it will not be easy to accomplish under any circumstances, given how badly the Administration has alienated the international community and what a mess it has made of Iraq. In the absence of internationalization, and given the great likelihood that "Iraqization" will fail miserably in the near to medium term, America faces the choice of being stuck in Iraq for many years or risking a destabilization of the Middle East and of the world energy economy. ■

IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA, TENSIONS RISE AMONG BLACK AND BROWN AND BROWNER.

Even

SUSAN STRAIGHT

What Vicente Fox, the President of Mexico, said was this: "There is no doubt that Mexicans, filled with dignity, willingness and ability to work, are doing jobs that not even blacks want to do there in the United States."

He said it in Spanish. He said it to a group of Texas businessmen meeting in Mexico. American and Mexican officials cited translation issues, context and the subject of illegal immigration. Jesse Jackson brought up border policies and citizenship rights.

PETER O. ZIERLEIN

Those are big words. But we should all be concerned with one word. A small one: Even.

Even the blacks. *Even* is a term of relativity and comparison—and here it is invoked as a measure of the bottom, as far as one can go down a totem pole or ladder of propriety or scale of personhood. Even. As in a caste system. Untouchables are referred to this way in India. Even the Untouchables wouldn't do that job. Or would they?

Even the blacks. The phrase stunned my daughters and their father. Added to it was the murder the week before of a popular black high school football player in Corona, 15 years old, stabbed to death in front of his condominium door by three young males, referred to in newspapers as "Hispanic." While they were killing him, they shouted racial slurs. We have heard the word—the one always referred to rather coyly ever since Mark Fuhrman as "the n-word" but that I have heard said aloud more this year than ever in my life—the word *nigger*, which I had hoped never to explain to my children, who are truly American combinations of seven different races/nationalities—Creek, Cherokee, Swiss, Irish, African, French and American.

Even, as a word, makes *nigger* so much more acceptable.

And President Fox isn't the only one who clearly feels rising contempt and increasing superiority—throughout Southern California, in the prison system, in the school system and in the grids of streets and freeways that connect us, hatred is being directed from Mexican-born and Mexican-descended peoples against other peoples of mixed race and most especially against people with African-American blood in their veins.

Earlier this year, waiting for my middle daughter at her junior high a block from our house, my youngest child, who is 9, ran her hands over the gray-painted picnic table. I looked down at the carved words under her brown fingers. *Nigger beater. Kill niggers.* Then the name of a Mexican-American gang.

But until recently, the only time I had ever heard anyone actually say that word, boldly and in the midst of an ordinary conversation, was at our elementary school, and it was repeated amid long sentences of Spanish.

My daughter's fourth grade class of twenty-eight is composed of four Anglo kids, two African-American children, four girls who are part Chicano, black and white in varying percentages and eighteen kids who are "Mexican" or "Chicano." Ten of these children were born in Mexico, go back and forth across the border frequently, speak Spanish as a first language and have parents who speak very little English.

I wait alongside them outside the playground's chain-link fence. I've heard them speaking Spanish to each other and apparently not worrying about me overhearing anything since I'm blond. I speak Spanish. And I understand the word *nigger*. I hear it in conjunction with dismissive complaints about other children.

Susan Straight's last novel, Highwire Moon *(Anchor), was set near the Mexican border. Her new novel,* A Million Nightingales, *will be published by Pantheon in January.*

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It shocked me so badly I couldn't tell anyone. Not my ex-husband, who works graveyard shift at a correctional facility, where this week he watches over the sleeping forms of the three brown-skinned kids who stabbed the black football player and yelled out what they believed he was while he died on his own doorstep.

Even. Even now that is what he was, to them.

Here in inland Southern California, where my mixed-race family has lived all my life, there are daily battles between brown and browner and darker than that. It would be far too easy to categorize it in terms understandable to most Northern or Eastern people. It's not African-American against Mexican-American. Not black versus Latino. Far more complicated than that, as race and class and struggle have always been here, in the land of Ramona, when Spaniards of pale skin hated Indians of browner skin, when ranchos turned to housing developments.

The new racism is partly about drugs and about prison, where those enemies are now in a second generation of hatred.

In the 1940s and '50s, when children and grandchildren of former slaves came here from the South to stay even as braceros were hired from Mexico and promised money that they rarely received, it was actually simpler: Whites hated both groups. In cities like Riverside and Corona, signs outside bars and restaurants read NO BLACKS, NO MEXICANS, NO DOGS.

In Riverside, sixty miles east of Los Angeles, racial discrimination was systematic and legal during the 1950s and early '60s, when I was born, as was my future husband, in the community hospital. His oldest brother is 50. He remembers the pool at Lincoln Park, where black and "Mexican" kids could swim only on Fridays, before the water was drained.

Those kids, his friends, weren't Mexican at all. They were Chicano, which is what most of our friends called themselves when we were growing up together. There are strict distinctions. Chicano kids were those who had been born here, in America and in our neighborhoods, where citrus groves had been planted in the 1800s. People of Mexican descent and African descent worked the groves with Chinese- and Italian-born laborers and Japanese-Americans.

We all ran around in the same irrigated rows of trees, with the same white-star blossoms, in the same manufactured forests of our Southern California.

It didn't matter if black or brown people had lived here in Southern California since 1910 or 1950, there were few places where they could buy houses. One was the Eastside, a neighborhood in Riverside that was about 90 percent African-American when I was a child, with Chicano families making up the other percentage. My neighborhood, which bordered the Eastside, was largely white but not wealthy enough to be that concerned: On my street were mostly military families, with Filipino husbands and Japanese wives, with African-American husbands and German wives, with Mexican-American and Japanese-American families.

We fought over money and bikes and perceived ugliness. Our junior high was evenly divided: one-third Anglo and Asian, one-third black and one-third Chicano. The few Japanese-born, Indian-born and Mexican-born kids were learning English. They never fought with anyone.

In high school we had a race riot, and it was over the word *nigger*, uttered on a bandstand. A white rock band had come to play a lunchtime concert, setting up in the area where many black students usually occupied picnic tables. When the band began to play, and jeers from all races flew, one of the band members apparently said the magic word, and all hell broke loose. But within minutes, black and white students were fighting each other over every imagined or real grievance of the past year, while Chicano and Asian students got out of the way. From behind a brick wall, while police helicopters circled over, I watched bigger people try to get money out of smaller people, whoever they were and whatever they looked like. The riot had devolved from race to strong-arm robbery.

It was all about money at the end, I thought, as we were released from school. Money and race always put us at each other's throats. I told my daughters about our 1975 riot, because all these years later I realized that it was poorer white kids fighting poorer black kids that day.

This time President Fox's comments are really about money and competition, too, and all the simmering and erupting hatred in Southern California between brown and browner is partly about the economy and no factory jobs, no places like Alcan Aluminum and Kaiser Steel, where my friends' parents worked. All of them. My Swiss-born grandmother worked alongside people of every color at Kaiser Steel. My friends' parents worked making airline parts or lawn mowers, manufacturing steel or processing grain. Those jobs are gone, moved out of state or out of the country, and what's left is competition for even the lowest-paid service or construction jobs. I've met California-born Chicano men who've told me everyone else on their construction sites is Guatemalan born.

Benefiting from the competition, and the divisive nature of poverty, are the business owners who cut wages and benefits and hire immigrants; in terms of real estate, now no one can afford to buy a house in any of our former neighborhoods. Many of the homes are rented to large groups of immigrants from Mexico or Central America. The deterioration of a manufacturing base and the inflation of real estate have made a whole class of black and brown young men who've grown up not playing sports together, or riding bikes in a neighborhood, but living in apartment complexes riddled with fear and suspicion of each other and perceiving each other as enemies.

The second aspect of the new racism is about drugs and about prison, where those enemies are now in a second generation of hatred. Prisons are one of California's largest industries and employers. My friends who are correctional officers have talked for more than five years now about the endless violence between brown and browner inmates in every facility from juvenile detention halls to maximum security prisons.

One friend, a vocational instructor at California Youth Authority, the facility in Chino, sees me every day at the elementary school, at that chain-link fence. This year, he has gone from depression to actual fear in his job, and earlier this year he

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described his vocational class: He cannot leave a single black prisoner alone, ever, in the laundry room or kitchen, because a group of Mexican-born prisoners continually attempts to murder every black inmate in proximity. It is their sole daily purpose, he says.

In late May that youth prison came close to riot. My friend, shaken and tired, told me that nine veteran guards could see, at a distance, the body postures of brown inmates clustering in the yard, and he described complicated patterns of movement that immediately led the guards, seven of whom were Chicano, to protect the black inmates.

We both talked about how young these men were—16 to 25—and how much they'd learned about hatred from older prisoners released into their communities, or communicating from the prison to their home neighborhoods. "It's war," my friend said, as we watched the children stream toward us.

Mike Davis wrote of this in his essay "Dante's Choice," published in 2002 in *Dead Cities*, referring to "an incipient, citywide gang war between Blacks and Latinos" in Los Angeles, describing how in LA neighborhoods where people of all races once co-existed, daily battles and skirmishes have destroyed friendships and lives. He cites prison as the major exporter of hatred, and overcrowding as a primary cause for racial animosity. Ironically, one inmate describes being "packed into these dorms all day long like slaves on an old slave ship."

That racial hatred has wafted out to our everyday lives. In May my ex-husband called from the juvenile detention facility where he is a guard; he was worried about rumors he'd heard and wanted me to check on our high school daughter. The rumors were so widespread that thousands of high school and junior high kids had stayed home. Our daughters had both heard the rumors and been afraid. A large amount of cocaine was said to have been stolen from a Mexican gang by a black gang. On Cinco de Mayo, Mexican gang members were said to have planned to seek out any blacks wearing white T-shirts and shoot from cars at targets selected while cruising past schools and stores.

My junior high daughter was most shaken. She'd worn a white T-shirt to school.

How brown is she, truly? Brown, or browner? Black? Even? Her cousins are all brown, varying shades of brown and gold and almond and unadulterated coffee.

Her closest cousin is brown-skinned. Three years ago, when he was 13, two boys he knew, also 13, were shot to death by Chicano or Mexican-born gangs. One was at a store a few blocks from my house, the other was chased onto a porch in the Eastside neighborhood and shot. That year two older black men were hunted down randomly on the street and beaten to death, and two other black men were shot in a car on the street corner just after we pulled away from the signal light. They had no gang affiliations, but the rumors persisted that they'd been killed by brown boys, Mexican-born boys who wanted to be inducted into gangs. The men had been hunted.

My nephew was so depressed and fatalistic that he wrote up his own will. We were often afraid to gather outside my father-in-law's house that summer, afraid to barbecue and play music.

My nephew lived with his stepmother then. Her mother was Mexican, her father black, and he most often ate tamales and enchiladas along with ribs and macaroni.

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Our other closest cousin, also unnerved and frightened to drive anywhere, with anyone, is as brown. But his father is half-Chicano, half-black as well. If an assailant had seen these brown boys riding in a car, yelled out a slur and shot them, would they have known what was in their blood, or their stomachs?

The football player, Dominic Redd, a student at Centennial High School in Corona, was stabbed to death a few days after the Cinco de Mayo rumors. No motive has been admitted. His funeral was attended by 2,500 people. His mother lost her only child and will never return to the condominium where they lived. His schoolmates, many Mexican-American, raised thousands of dollars with a car wash to help her move.

Shortly afterward, another race riot broke out, at Jefferson High School in Los Angeles, as well as one at Los Angeles High School. These were the latest in a series of racial fights on campuses this spring. On television news reports, black and Latino parents yelled at each other or stood side by side, sympathetic and scared, as police cordoned off the schools and hauled away still-punching brown and browner teenagers. Then Los Angeles mayor-elect Antonio Villaraigosa, himself a veteran of LA high schools, announced he would be at Jefferson the following morning to try to defuse tension: "We've had fights and problems over the years," he said, "but we've never had racial hatred like this."

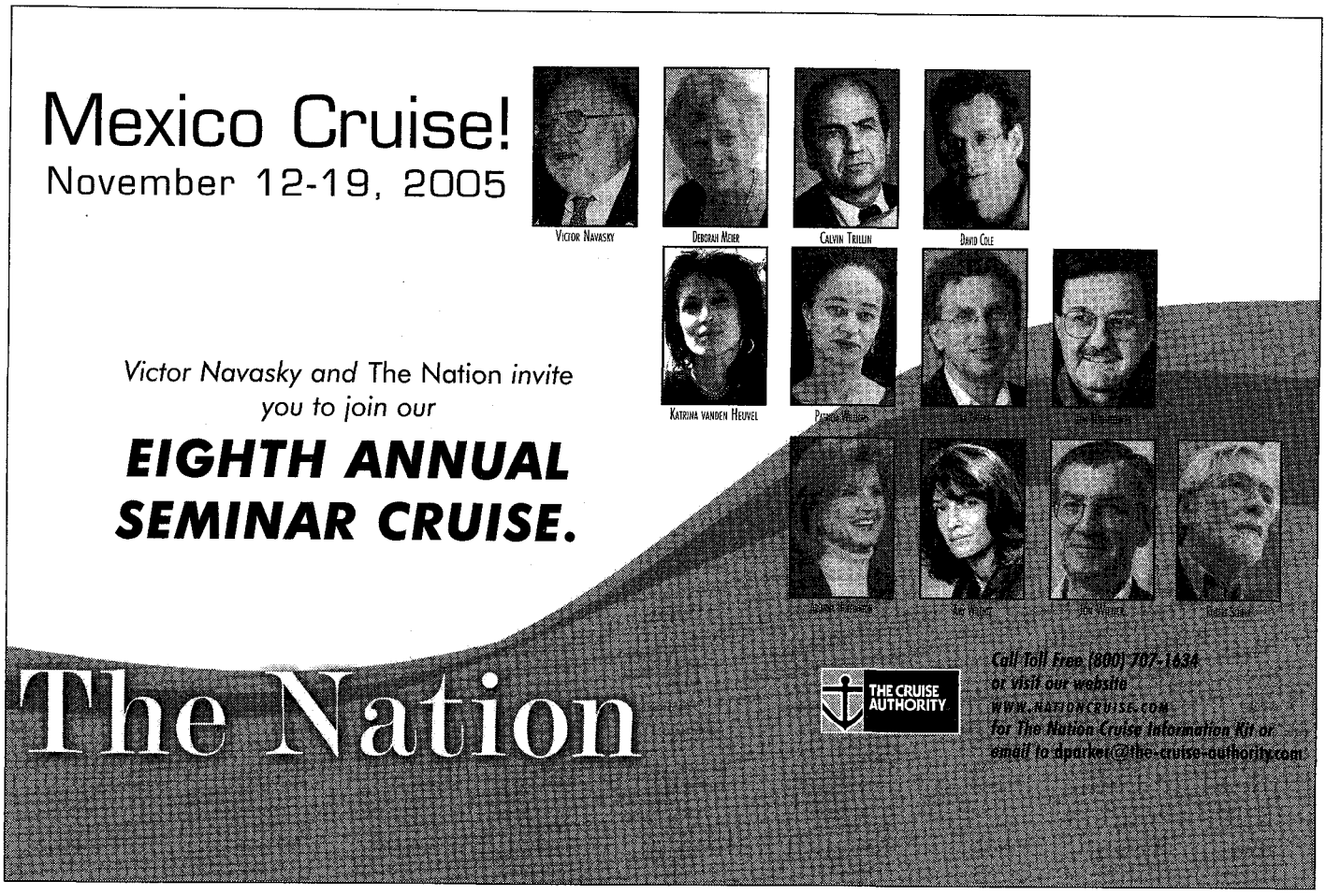
Students interviewed on TV kept mentioning the overcrowding at their schools, how hard it was to get along when they were all bumping into each other. Overcrowded schools, jails, freeways—brown and browner and white people working too hard, driving too far, not able to afford housing with breathing space, or not able to work at all in the new high-tech or service economy, sending children to school where they can't find a seat or a book.

My ex-husband sat on the porch later that day and told me about the 15-year-old killer of the football player. He watches over the three incarcerated boys while they sleep, during his graveyard shift. He knew the word the brown boys had been yelling at the browner boy, while he was dying of nine stab wounds. Our girls were inside. I told him, for the first time, about the picnic table and the elementary school parents. He shook his head. "Do you remember that little kid?" he said to me, and I nodded.

He'd ridden a bike to work twelve years ago. He worked early mornings then. At dawn he rode past a house a mile away, where a little white kid sat on a porch eating fruit and spitting it out onto the dirt yard. The kid glanced up and said loudly, "Nigger. Nigger." He said it over and over as my husband rode past. Glee. Repetition. More glee.

My husband told me that night, with a tone of wonder, "His parents must say that to him all the time, to get him so comfortable with it. To just say it over and over and over."

President Fox's comment lingered in my head that week as I followed a car whose license frame read MORELIA AUTO SALES. Morelia is a town in the state of Michoacan in the country of Mexico. Thousands of people in this area are from Morelia, or have parents or grandparents born in Morelia, and they are very loyal to the place of their ancestry. Markets near my house sell *menudo* and *carnitas estilo Michoacán*, and restaurants are



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named for states and cities. Zacatecas. Sinaloa.

When decrying the horrific treatment of immigrants in this country, and especially in California, people rightly bring up slavery. I have written a novel about immigrants from Mexico, about the border, farm work and desert deaths and desperation.

Mexican nationals, and increasingly Guatemalans and Salvadorans, are found locked in houses in our county, sixty to a two-bedroom house, imprisoned by the Mexican coyotes waiting for payment from their families. Mexican nationals die in locked trucks, freeze in boxcars, are robbed by Chicano and Mexican and Salvadoran gangs, are cheated of their money and are often treated in ways similar to some slaves in America's past.

My ex-husband's ancestors were slaves. They were brought here from Africa. They were owned by white people. Slavery, as an institution, is not comparable to present-day immigration.

Slaves didn't swim back across the ocean to Senegal for Christmas. They didn't wire money home to Angola so their waiting wives and children could build houses for their old age. They didn't struggle back and forth across a dangerous and fortified border, cross polluted streams and bravely trek hundreds of miles to work so they could support their families and send their children to school, as so many immigrants do now, their children in school with my children, their wives and themselves elbow to elbow with me at the chain-link fence while we watch our children cross the playground toward us.

Instead, slaves from Africa were here in America forever, until released by death. They never saw the landscapes of their homeland again.

Their children did not go to school. They were forbidden to read or write or worship or sing songs unpleasing to their owners. They were whipped to death or rewarded with food. They made no money. They sent no money. They owned nothing, not even their own clothes. They didn't own their own children.

They regarded their surroundings and either succumbed or survived. Their descendants did the same. Some of them survived Tennessee, Mississipi, Texas and Oklahoma, and made their way to California. One of them, a woman named Callie, gave birth to my father-in-law. And my own eldest daughter plans to name her girl child Callie, in tribute.

Tonight I will listen to my favorite local radio show, a Friday night program I have been dedicated to for twenty years, Radio Aztlan. Aztlan is the legendary land of Chicano pride. A former student of mine, a Chicano native of the Eastside neighborhood, is a deejay for the show. "Come on, brown, time to get down," he says every Friday. "'S up, raz?"

Raza means race. The brown race. "*Viva la raza!*" was the cry of farmworkers and Chicano activists in the 1960s and '70s. *Raza* is a term of endearment, much like homey or brother.

The historic favorites of oldies shows are sixties soul singers, most of them black, and for all these years I've loved that about my hometown. That Chicano guys would drive past in a cherry 1964 Impala listening to Brook Benton sing "Oogum Boogum." "You got soul, baby, too much soul," he sings.

Another killer oldies show has become the most popular radio show in the Southwest, beloved by Chicano audiences in all of California, in Las Vegas and Phoenix and Tucson. Every Sunday, Chicano listeners call in song dedications for their loved ones incarcerated in prisons all over the area, and two of the favorites are also by black soul singers from much earlier times. Every Sunday evening, while I'm cooking, I hear these same two songs, sent to men and women inside overcrowded prisons that would seem to resemble slave ships transporting captives from another shore to labor here all their lives: "It's a Thin Line Between Love and Hate," and a song about a black Southern mother telling her son that "Only the Strong Survive." ■

LETTERS
CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)

15,740 students from reaching their classrooms. The freedom that Israeli professors and students enjoy begins to appear less like a form of freedom than an arrogant colonial privilege or, at the least, a kind of wry joke.

If British and American universities and colleges want to invite Israeli scholars to visit, lecture, attend conferences or collaborate, they should do so on the condition that the Palestinian faculty are allowed not only to do the same but also to teach their students in an environment free from the devastating consequences of Israel's ongoing military occupation of Palestine. Yet as D.D. Guttenplan suggests ["After the Boycott... What?" June 20], the boycott campaign is also in desperate need of new ideas. New strategies like trilateral co-sponsorship or even multilateral academic collaboration are just a few endeavors that could supplement a boycott of Israeli education (and the de-education in the occupied territories) with a truthful and positive dimension, much like Edward Said and Daniel Barenboim's East-West Divan, an orchestra made up of young Palestinians and Israelis. Such orchestration is needed in all fields, not just music.

Academic freedom in a country that treats those it occupies and governs by military force in this way can hardly have real meaning as a principle. The real nature of enlightened reason and knowledge is actually located in the voices of those who have scarcely had an opportunity to speak, write, travel or learn freely at all. If the conditions of a meaningful and interrelated notion of academic freedom in Israel and its occupied territories cannot be realized in new forms, then a boycott of Israeli universities is not necessarily a "bad idea." It is an imperative and moral one.

ANDREW N. RUBIN
PAUL BOVÉ

WIENER REPLIES

Irvine, Calif.

■ Andrew Rubin, Paul Bové and I agree that Palestinian academics are denied many of the freedoms enjoyed by their Israeli counterparts. We disagree about whether a boycott of faculty members at Israeli universities is a good way to fight the occupation. Rubin and Bové write that it is "imperative and moral" to boycott academics in a country that occupies and governs another by force. The United States has killed many more civilians in its occupation of Iraq than Israel has killed Palestinian civilians. So why don't Rubin and Bové propose a world boycott of US professors? *That* would send George W. Bush a message!

The Israeli government is responsible for its occupation policies, not the university faculty. In fact, much of the opposition to the occupation among Israelis comes from the universities. These are precisely the Jews who are speaking out in favor of Palestinian rights and against the occupation's brutality and lies. The "imperative and moral" strategy is to support and strengthen that opposition, rather than working to weaken, isolate and undermine it.

JON WIENER

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COMMENT

(Continued From Page 8)

misspellings, uses a very broad brush to categorize guests as "liberal," "conservative" or "neutral." The Mann study, according to Senator Byron Dorgan, is "an amateur attempt to prove there was a liberal bias" on the public airwaves.

And yet Tomlinson (and his allies in the White House) have demonstrated greater political acuity than Gingrich and Pressler. Gone is the bombast about liberal elites and wine cellars; Tomlinson has instead positioned himself as an unlikely champion of "objectivity and balance" on public radio and TV. "*NOW With Bill Moyers*," Tomlinson wrote in a December 2003 letter to PBS president Pat Mitchell, "does not contain anything approaching the balance the law requires for public broadcasting." He was alluding to the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967, a contested portion of which, Section 396, calls for "strict adherence to objectivity and balance in all programs." But the text of the law is ambiguous, because three paragraphs later the CPB—which was created as a firewall between Congress and the stations—is instructed to "assure the maximum freedom" of public broadcasters by adopting a laissez-faire attitude toward editorial content. Embracing one aspect of Section 396 and sidestepping another, Tomlinson has aggressively imposed the "objectivity and balance" clause on public broadcasters.

PBS executives, for their part, have worked to accommodate the needs of a more conservative CPB. "By spring 2003," according to the trade newspaper *Current*, "PBS was quietly letting major producers know that it wanted proposals for programs that would add conservative balance to the schedule." In November 2003 PBS announced the launch of a new series hosted by Tucker Carlson. A year later the *Journal Editorial Report*, hosted by Paul Gigot, hit the public airwaves, backed by Tomlinson and funded by CPB. (Carlson's show also received CPB funding.) But the new conservative programs weren't sufficient for Tomlinson, and his CPB continues to squeeze PBS. Earlier this year, according to the *New York Times*, a CPB contract granting $26 million to PBS was held up after the CPB insisted PBS enforce the "objectivity and balance" clause in the 1967 charter—a request, according to PBS lawyers, that constituted a serious threat to PBS's editorial independence. The money was eventually released, but CPB's initial posture was disturbing to the PBS leadership.

Tomlinson's machinations have drawn considerable media attention, yet few commentators have pointed out that his actions fit neatly into a recognizable pattern that goes back to the Nixon years, when Republicans first sought to manipulate and control the new public broadcasting entity. In the early 1970s Reed Irvine, the late founder of Accuracy in Media (AIM), accused PBS of neglecting Section 396. Spooked by various PBS documentaries, AIM pressured the Federal Communications Commission to enforce the "objectivity and balance" clause. The FCC declined. In 1977 Senator Orrin Hatch tried again to push the FCC to enforce the clause with a bill titled the Public Broadcasting Fairness Act, but it went nowhere.

In the late 1970s leading advocates of public broadcasting clearly understood the readiness of conservative critics to exploit Section 396. In *Made Possible By…: The Death of Public Broadcasting in the United States*, James Ledbetter noted that the Carter Administration, in the wake of the Hatch bill, recognized Section 396 as a source of "continued mischief" and considered eliminating the "objectivity and balance" requirements. In 1979 Frank Lloyd, one of Carter's leading advisers on public broadcasting, accurately predicted that "individual Congressmen will continue to use the clause as a justification for closer CPB control of internal journalistic program judgments and close Congressional oversight of those decisions." But Section 396 remained on the books, and conservative critics in the Reagan era took note of it. Indeed, the historical record suggests that the notion of quantifying the political content of specific shows did not originate with Tomlinson but with two members of the Reagan-era CPB (each of whom perceived a liberal bias on PBS): Sonia Landau and Richard Brookhiser. According to Ledbetter, Brookhiser proposed a content analysis that would confirm or disprove Irvine's old allegations about liberal bias, but the idea ran into resistance from public broadcasters and was abandoned—until Tomlinson commissioned his content analysis from Mann.

The latest Republican offensive against public broadcasting has yielded mixed results. On June 23 the House repudiated an attempt to slash $100 million from the CPB's 2006 budget—"a huge moral victory for public broadcasting," according to PBS president Pat Mitchell. Yet recent events have once again illuminated two sobering facts about our public broadcasting system: its vulnerability to Congressional appropriations on the one hand and political chicanery from CPB board members on the other. These realities have plagued the system since its birth in the late 1960s, and they remain pressing issues today. From its inception, the CPB board has been a repository for patronage appointments for Democrats and Republicans alike. One current board member, Cheryl Halpern, has, along with her family, donated more than $324,000 to Republican causes since 1989. Another, Gay Hart Gaines, was a top fundraiser for Gingrich. Periodic attempts to depoliticize the board have failed: Last year, the Association of Public Television Stations launched a campaign to allocate four board seats to public broadcasting station representatives, but the efforts were thwarted.

No issue in public broadcasting is more urgent than that of funding. Alternative proposals to guarantee the financial independence of the public broadcasting system have been floating around since the late 1960s, when members of the Carnegie Commission attempted to implement a BBC-style license fee on television sets, a proposal that sparked furious private sector opposition. Currently, the federal subsidy for public broadcasting in England is almost $27 per citizen, compared with $1.80 in the United States. Until we find a way to resolve the gargantuan funding issues, conservatives in Congress and their lackeys on the CPB board—who are united by a fear of hard-hitting, independent public affairs programming—will continue to wield Section 396 as a weapon, and our public broadcasting system, four decades after its birth, will remain an easy target for Republican deception, demagogy and mischief.

SCOTT SHERMAN

Scott Sherman is a Nation *contributing writer.*

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

The Treason of the Clerics

JONATHAN RÉE

FOUCAULT AND THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION: Gender and the Seductions of Islamism.
By Janet Afary and Kevin B. Anderson. Chicago. 346 pp. $24.

Unlike some other stars of Parisian intellectual life, Michel Foucault was always reluctant to air his opinions about big political issues. It was not that he was uninterested in politics or indifferent to human suffering, just that he was suspicious of the sort of thinkers—"universal intellectuals," he called them—who consider it their privilege and duty to set the world to rights, as if history had appointed them to speak on its behalf, or morality had summoned them to be the conscience of the human race.

Anyone who has read his books—from *Madness and Civilization* and *Birth of the Clinic*, published in the early 1960s, to the multivolume *History of Sexuality*, which he was still working on when he died in 1984 at the age of 57—will understand why Foucault would not presume to speak in the name of others. He was in his way a hands-on historian, who spent half his life peering at brittle old documents in the Bibliothèque Nationale. He was also a social theorist with a special interest in small-scale processes, or in the "micro-power," as he called it, that travels through the "capillaries" of the institutions by which we live. On top of that he was an accomplished writer in a particular French tradition, and an admirer of the "radiant uncertainties" of the Surrealist poet Raymond Roussel. There is a Surrealist exuberance in all of Foucault's works, and he was constantly on the lookout for themes that refused to align themselves with the normal ways of the world—tales of oddballs, fantasists and fanatics, or idiosyncrasies, exceptions and discrepancies. He was, you might say, a poet of the uncommonplace: a philosopher of the unphilosophical, a historian of the unhistorical and a politician of the unpolitical.

As a student in Paris in the early 1950s, Foucault had a three-year fling with the Communist Party. It ended badly on both sides, and though he remained on the left, he became an unforgiving critic of leftist conservatism, sentimentality and nostalgia. His political activism would from then on be confined to supporting scattered groups of prisoners, psychiatric patients and young unemployed immigrants, and encouraging them to organize themselves on their own terms, without reference to warders, nurses or social workers, let alone political parties or, for that matter, Surrealistic *littérateurs* like himself.

It goes without saying that he did not blame his misfits, lunatics, delinquents and eccentrics for deviating from conventional norms; his originality was that he did not praise them either. He was perhaps the first thinker to identify the perversity of the kind of progressive thinking that expects the oppressed to conform to a preconceived model of resistance or revolt. According to the progressive norm, genuine victims of injustice will be ennobled by adversities, strengthened by misery and purified by suffering. They will bear witness to their authenticity by playing a starring role in the good old drama of democratic resistance to oppression. And they will gratify their patrons by bringing new vigor and militancy to the part, and perhaps a dash of cathartic revolutionary violence, not to mention unimpeachable moral authority. If Foucault had a mission in life, it was to discredit the progressive model of the perfect rebel.

Did Foucault succumb to the 'seductions of Islamism' while reporting on the Iranian revolution, as this book charges?

The main argument of his never-to-be-completed work on the history of sexuality was that the cheerleaders of "sexual libera-

Jonathan Rée is the author of, most recently, I See a Voice: Deafness, Language and the Senses—A Philosophical History *(Metropolitan).*

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tion" could be as pompous, despotic and self-deceiving as the repressive prudes they took pride in defying. The ideas of the self-appointed liberators could, as Foucault noted, be traced to the Freudo-Marxism of Wilhelm Reich and Herbert Marcuse, but he regarded them as part of something far larger. Speaking in Tokyo in April 1978, he went so far as to suggest that the bogus mantras of sexual liberation could be heard throughout the entire history of "the West." We Europeans, Foucault said—or rather, cutely correcting himself, "we others"—have been engaged for millennia in a quixotic adventure unparalleled in the rest of the world: an earnest quest for the truth about ourselves in the form of "the truth about our sexuality." Throughout the twentieth century, moreover, we "European others" have been regaling ourselves with a tale about how Freud eventually exploded the age-old hypocrisies, allowing sexuality to be "released from its fetters" at last:

> First movement: Greek and Roman antiquity, where sexuality was free, and capable of expressing itself without hindrance.... Next, there was Christianity, which—for the first time in the history of the West—imposed a great prohibition on sexuality, saying "no" to pleasure and to sex.... But then, beginning in the sixteenth century, the bourgeoisie found itself in a situation...of economic domination and cultural hegemony; it took over the...Christian rejection of sexuality and made it its own, enforcing it with unprecedented rigor and severity, and perpetuating it into the nineteenth century, until at last...the veil began to be lifted by Freud.

In order to avoid misunderstandings with his Japanese audience, Foucault spelled out his opinion that the Freudo-Marxist epic of sexual liberation was "misleading and untenable, for hundreds of reasons." But in the *History of Sexuality* he simply presented a parade of awkward and bizarre case studies and left his readers to draw their own conclusions. His aim, after all, was not to replace our old smug certainties with new ones but to help us formulate some uncertainties of our own, as radiantly tentative as possible. Dogmatics and polemics could never be his style.

When Foucault's Japanese hosts thanked him for the clarity of his exposition, he turned the compliment gracefully. Obscurity was unforgivable, he said; indeed it was "a form of despotism." Yet he had to admit that his own elucidations sometimes had the effect of *cafouillage*, of messing things up and leaving them more confused than ever. But at least he could never be accused of false or factitious clarity. He never emulated the kind of Freudianism that confidently discovers vast unconscious realities behind the carnival of false consciousness in which the rest of us live our lives. Nor did he yearn for the Marxist self-assurance that scolds a benighted political present by the light of a glorious future that has not yet dawned on anyone else. Foucault was never going to sign on to an a priori separation between those who are in the know and those who are not, and his *cafouillage* was not a feckless abrogation of intellectual responsibility so much as a principled avoidance of the arrogance of authority. He simply wanted to radiate uncertainty.

For Foucault, the Iranian revolution provided a concrete refutation of the Marxist adage that 'religion is the opium of the people.'

Shortly after returning from Japan, Foucault got another chance to travel in the non-European world. Protests against the Shah's regime in Iran had been intensifying since the beginning of the year, and by August 1978 millions of Iranians were participating in strikes and demonstrations. In September Foucault got himself a berth as special correspondent for the Italian daily *Corriere della Sera*, and went off to spend ten days with strikers and demonstrators on the streets of Iran.

In one of his earliest reports, he dissected the standard Western take on the crisis in Iran: that the Shah, though not the most fragrant of statesmen, embodied the forces of "modernization" and "secularization," and therefore had the future on his side, while the oppositionists were a rabble of backward peasants and religious fanatics who had yet to adjust to the reality of the modern world. Foucault's informants in Iran saw things very differently: As far as they were concerned, their struggle was against corruption rather than modernization. The "honest people" of the West might turn a blind eye to the "speculation, corrupt practices, embezzlement, and swindling that constitute the veritable daily bread of our trade, our industry, and our finances," but for the protesters that was no longer possible. Corruption in Iran was manifestly the "dynasty's way of exercising power and a fundamental mechanism of the economy"; but it was a parasite that was beginning to destroy its host. The modernization that had once seemed unstoppable was being derailed by corruption: "As a political project and as a principle of social transformation," Foucault wrote, modernization "is a thing of the past in Iran."

In early October, Foucault was describing groups of unarmed demonstrators who were stopping government troops in their tracks with shouts of "Islam, Islam!" and "Come with us to save the Quran!"—a living refutation, as he observed, of the Marxist adage that "religion is the opium of the people." He was at first surprised to find left-wing students clamoring for "Islamic government." But then he realized that the Shiite clergy was nothing like a Catholic hierarchy. It had no popes or cardinals nor any centralized system of authority, and if the mullahs were galvanizing a popular revolt against corruption, it was not because they were in command but because they were giving ordinary Iranians exactly what they needed: "a way of being together, a way of speaking and listening, a means of understanding each other and sharing each other's desires."

The protesters who were calling for Islamic government explained themselves to Foucault by speaking about an "ideal" or "utopia" fashioned from Islamic values as they understood them: the dignity of labor, respect for minorities, equality before the law and government accountable to the people. Foucault confessed that he was embarrassed and disappointed by what they said:

> It is often said that definitions of Islamic government are imprecise. To me, however, they seemed to have a clarity that was completely familiar and also, it must be said, far from reassuring. "These are simply the catchphrases of democracy—of bourgeois or revolutionary democracy," I said. "We in the West have been repeating them to ourselves ever since the eighteenth century, and look where they have got us." But they immediately replied: "These catchphrases were part of the Quran long before your philosophers adopted them; in the industrialized Christian West they may have lost their meaning, but Islam is going to restore their value and their force."

Foucault was not persuaded, but as the students elaborated their "dreams" of Islamic government, it occurred to him that he was witnessing an outbreak

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of "political spirituality" similar to what swept through Europe in the time of Calvin or Cromwell. It might not amount to a political program, but still it was impressive in its way:

> It impresses me as what you might call a "political will." It also impresses me as an attempt, in response to current problems, to politicize structures that are both social and religious. And it impresses me as an attempt to open up a spiritual dimension in politics.

It was now October 1978. The streets were resounding with calls for "Islamic government," but the Shah was still in his palace, and the spiritual leader Ayatollah Khomeini was biding his time in Paris and keeping his options open. Back home, liberal commentators were doing their best to fit the new political possibilities into the old progressive narratives. But Iran did not present the familiar lineaments of a struggle between pure-hearted youthful rebels and dark-souled reactionaries, and it was difficult to see it as another China, Cuba or Vietnam, or a second edition of Paris in 1968. Meanwhile, the very idea of "political spirituality" seemed like an anachronism that could never get any traction in the modern world.

Foucault, who had just returned to Paris, was not so sure. He admitted that he "knew very little about Iran," but it struck him that the entire Iranian population was acting like a massive political hedgehog with a single contradictory passion: the desire for a process that would somehow "prevent politics from gaining a foothold." The movement was clearly unsustainable, but that did not make it aberrant or deplorable. The idea of Islamic government would settle down eventually; it would prove to be either "a reconciliation, a contradiction, or the threshold of something new," but for the time being it was impossible to tell. "Let us admit," Foucault concluded in the middle of October, "that we Westerners would be in a poor position to give advice to the Iranians on this matter."

Two weeks later he was back in Iran. He was struck by the way the resistance was gaining ground not through military strength but through the power of information. Protests were sustained by a diffuse system of communication that the state could neither monitor nor control: Messages from unidentified sources were transmitted by telephones and sermons and above all by "the tool *par excellence* of counter-information": the audiocassette recorder. "If the shah is about to fall," he said, "it will be due above all to the cassette tape."

Everyone he spoke to expected Khomeini to come back soon, but Foucault was assured that "there will not be a Khomeini party; there will not be a Khomeini government." What the protesters wanted was not even a revolution as Westerners understood it: "Everybody is quite aware that they want something completely different," something whose consequences would come as a surprise to the political cognoscenti. The only certainty was that the new revolt of Islam was "irreducible" and unpredictable—"the form of revolt that is the most modern and the most insane."

Foucault's experiment in political journalism earned him rebukes in the French press from the very beginning. Maxime Rodinson, a venerable Marxist scholar of Islam, informed him wearily that an Islamic government was bound to usher in some kind of "archaic fascism." And an exiled Iranian feminist claimed that Foucault's interest in "political spirituality" was blinding him, like many other Westerners, to the inherent injustice of Islam, especially toward women. For the time being, Foucault refused to respond, but

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events seemed to be vindicating his critics. The Shah fled Iran in the early weeks of 1979, Ayatollah Khomeini returned in triumph and at the end of March an Islamic republic was ratified in a popular referendum: a classic case, it would seem, of a resurgence of reactionary authoritarian populism. Many of the possibilities that Foucault had canvassed were coming to nothing, and in April he published an open letter to the new Iranian Prime Minister, Mehdi Bazargan, expressing dismay at the abridgment of rights under the incoming "government of mullahs."

But while he remonstrated with his friends in Iran, Foucault never yielded an inch to his critics in Paris. Despite their accusations, he had not taken it upon himself to advocate Islamic government: He had simply recorded some of the aspirations of the protesters, while trying to dismantle the stale and defensive notions that filled the heads of Western observers. "The problem of Islam as a political force is an essential one for our time and for the years to come," he wrote, "and we cannot approach it with a modicum of intelligence if we start out from a position of hatred." At the end of March, when the veteran leftists Claudie and Jacques Broyelle called on him to confess his "mistake," he blew his top. He was appalled by the peremptory summons to confess his "errors," saying that it "remind[s] me of something, and of many things, against which I have fought." And if things were indeed turning out badly in Iran, that did not invalidate his remarks about how they might have been different; nor did it show that events were bound to revert to a familiar pattern and lose their capacity to surprise us. But Foucault was wounded by the taunts of his critics, and at the end of May 1979 he retired from the conflict. His adventure as a contrarian political journalist was at an end.

The whole of Foucault's Iranian journalism—a total of fifteen articles and interviews—was republished in France in 1994 as part of a four-volume anthology of his occasional writings. Ever since then, French critics have made the most of his "error" over Islamism, and some of them sought to implicate him in the attacks on Washington and New York in 2001. In the English-speaking world, however, the Iranian writings have hitherto been ignored; but the anomaly is now being put right with some authority by Janet Afary and Kevin B. Anderson. In *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution*, they tell the full story of Foucault's sudden induction into the journalist's trade and his contacts with exiles in Paris and rebels in Iran, concluding with an appendix of 100 pages comprising translations of Foucault's articles, together with some of the reactions they provoked, copiously annotated and explained. (The translations are sound, though I have amended some of them here.) One could hardly have asked for more.

One might have asked for less, however. Although Afary and Anderson have spent ten years working on their book, it has not been a labor of love, and their summaries of Foucault's achievements are consistently hostile and tendentious. Noting that he was skeptical about self-congratulatory Western narratives of progress and modernization, they make the preposterous assertion that "Foucault privileged premodern social relations over modern ones." Turning to sexuality, they quote his Japanese lecture about the Freudo-Marxist epic of sexual liberation but interpret it as a solemn declaration of faith rather than an exercise in delicate satire, thus demonstrating not only a spectacular impermeability to irony but also an inability to turn the page and read Foucault's reminder that the story was, in his opinion, "misleading and untenable, for hundreds of reasons." After that it is no surprise that they misunderstand Foucault's histories of asylums, hospitals and schools, which, *pace* Afary and Anderson, were not celebrations of the self-affirming inner subjectivity of the oppressed but arguments for seeing subjectivity as a complex byproduct of systems of discipline. Finally, they seek to give philosophical depth to their indictment by suggesting that Foucault was influenced by Heidegger's notion of "being towards death," which may be true for all I know, though Foucault could have told them that Heidegger was trying to explain the difference between our sense of the future and our sense of the past, rather than advocating some reckless dicing with "limit situations."

Having constructed an imaginary Foucault intoxicated by "authenticity," "creativity" and "living dangerously"—notions that have no place in his work except as butts of his teasing paradoxes—Afary and Anderson offer their readers the astonishing assurance that "Foucault's concept of authenticity meant looking at situations where people lived dangerously and flirted with death, the site where creativity originated." And having transformed the gentle apostle of radiant uncertainty into a philosophical version of Charles Manson, they credit him with an "uncritical enthusiasm for the Islamist movement of Iran." Foucault's quizzical mixture of excitement and disappointment over Iran, together with his perceptive remarks about corruption as a political issue and the recrudescence of political spirituality in the Muslim world, are passed over in silence as Afary and Anderson condemn him for an "uncritical embrace" of Islamism and try to explain it in terms of a kinky fascination with "limit experiences," "new forms of creativity" and even (yes, they are serious) the "transgressive powers" of Ayatollah Khomeini.

Unlike many on the left, Foucault understood that Iran wasn't another China, Cuba or Vietnam, much less a second edition of May '68.

Noting that Foucault sometimes described the Iranian rebellion as "irreducible," Afary and Anderson suggest that the French word *irréductible* had a peculiar significance for him, conveying a blanket justification for every form of "opposition to Western modernity." But there is no great mystery about the word: Go into any French nursery and you will find that Astérix and the other valiant Gauls in the classic children's books are known as *irréductibles Gaulois* on account of their refusal to obey the well-established laws of history and bow to the might of the Roman empire. Whatever else you may think about them, the Iranian revolutionaries were as irreducible as Astérix, Obélix and Panoramix; and so too was the philosophical historian who did his best to listen to what they had to say.

On the one occasion that I met Foucault, in his immaculate white apartment in Paris in 1976, he expressed uneasiness about his works being translated into English. They were all written, he said, in opposition to the know-it-all leftism of the Communist Party, and without that framework, there was no telling what effect they might have. I tried to reassure him as I gulped at my big tumbler of whiskey, while he leaned back and smiled and sipped his mineral water. All these years later, Afary and Anderson seem to have proved him right: His skeptical radicalism is not easily transplanted. I am reminded that Foucault had a serene way of rising above captious criticisms: He would simply invoke the most elementary axiom of political existence, not to mention *Some Like It Hot*: "Nothing's perfect." ■

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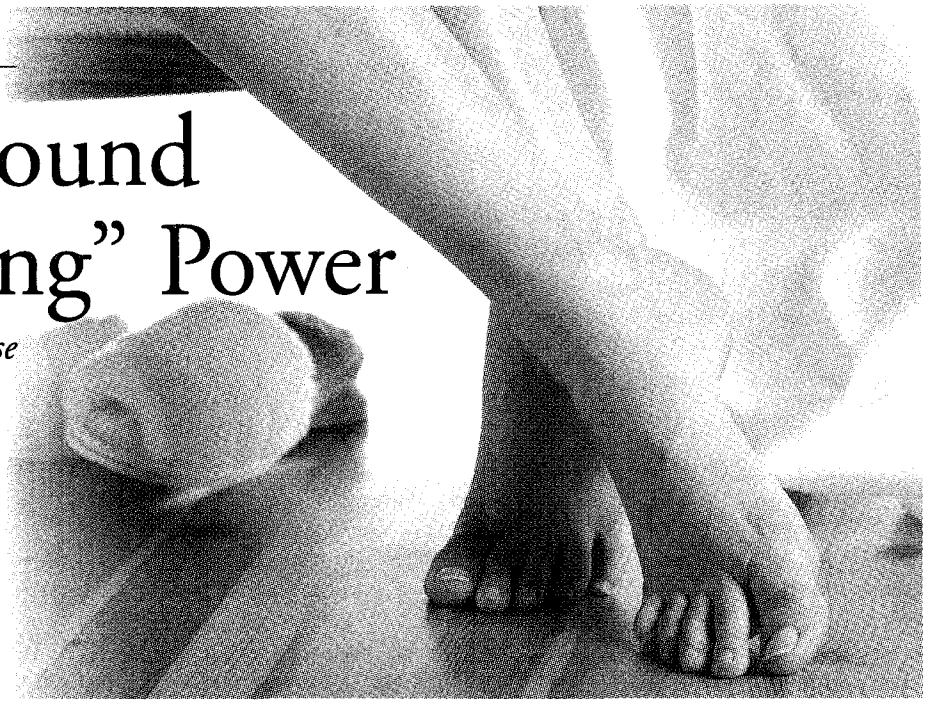
Important Health News

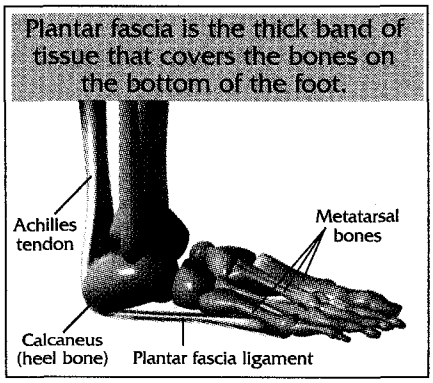
New Relief for Heel Pain

We Have Found The "Heeling" Power

New therapy for the leading cause of heel pain—plantar fasciitis.



Plantar Fasciitis (pronounced PLAN-tar fashee-EYE-tiss). I didn't even know how to pronounce that term but according to *Orthopedics Today,* plantar fasciitis is the most common adult foot problem! What I did know is that when I would get up in the morning and put my foot to the floor, it would take me a few seconds to be able to walk because of the severe pain I was experiencing. I had a sharp pain in the inside part of the bottom of my heel when I put my weight on it. The pain made even a short walk so difficult. Over time I had to sacrifice doing everyday activities I used to enjoy.


Plantar fascia is the thick band of tissue that covers the bones on the bottom of the foot.
Achilles tendon
Metatarsal bones
Calcaneus (heel bone)
Plantar fascia ligament

Plantar Fasciitis is an inflammation caused by excessive stretching of the fibrous tissue along the bottom of your foot that connects your heel bone to your toes. As I started to understand my foot pain I realized I'm not alone. Did you know that the *American Podiatric Medical Association* estimates that millions of people receive treatment for plantar fasciitis in the United States each year? In fact, the problem is so common there are numerous causes such as:

- Wearing improper shoes with poor support
- Arthritis
- Having diabetes
- Being flat footed
- Having a high arch
- An increase in physical activity

The good news is that plantar fasciitis can get better with the help of this simple new treatment. I've tried many of the products on the market—including rest, stretching, change of shoes, arch supports, anti-inflammatory agents and even night splints. But night splints were just too big and bulky and uncomfortable to sleep in. I recently found this great new product—Thermoskin Plantar FXT™.

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Fables of the Reconstruction

DIANE McWHORTER

SON OF THE ROUGH SOUTH: An Uncivil Memoir.
By Karl Fleming. PublicAffairs. 432 pp. $26.95.

THE INFORMANT: The FBI, the Ku Klux Klan, and the Murder of Viola Liuzzo.
By Gary May. Yale. 431 pp. $35.

America has a redemption complex, which explains why we seem to be perpetually revisiting the South of the civil rights era to atone for the sins of segregation. Only this past June, front-page headlines proclaimed deliverance down in Philadelphia, Mississippi, where 80-year-old Edgar Ray "Preacher" Killen was belatedly convicted of manslaughter for his role in the Klan execution, during the Freedom Summer of 1964, of civil rights activists James Chaney, Mickey Schwerner and Andrew Goodman. The attraction of such dramas is obvious: They pit heroes against villains in silhouettes of black and white, and even if it takes forty-one years, as with the Chaney-Schwerner-Goodman case, the good guys eventually triumph.

Of course, we know that the calculus of moral consequence is more ambiguous than that. Abstract principles like good and evil are often cunning agents of the ruthless truths concealed in human nature, notably the blind consistency with which those who have power take advantage of those who don't. "Fine Christian gentleman," after all, was code in the South for "segregationist." Indeed, even the most decent of white Southerners exploited the fraudulent superiority conferred on them by simple virtue of their skin color. This was the sort of garden-variety conformism that the social psychologist Thomas Pettigrew argued did not reflect serious conviction. What, then, is to account for the rogues and dissidents, those who took up positions on the polar ends of the racial status quo, either as extremist abusers of their power or as champions of the powerless?

The perplexing dynamics of moral choice are explored in two new books about ordinary Southern white men who ended up on opposite sides of the civil rights revolution during the final cataclysmic days of segregation. In both, (im)moral behavior seems less like a conscious act than the slippery-slope momentum of random historical and biographical convergence. *Son of the Rough South* is Karl Fleming's memoir of how he transcended an "uncivil" boyhood in an orphanage to bear intrepid witness to the civil rights struggle as a Southern correspondent for *Newsweek* in the 1960s. While Fleming was covering the martyrs of the Movement—and occasionally, as in Philadelphia, Mississippi, risking his own life—Gary Thomas Rowe Jr., the subject of Gary May's *The Informant*, was helping to create them. As the Federal Bureau of Investigation's undercover man inside the Ku Klux Klan, Rowe parlayed his sole obvious asset, his whiteness, into a license—arguably—to kill, drawing the federal government into a foggy collaboration with the hooded brotherhood of paramilitary segregationists. The toxic codependency between Rowe and the FBI culminated in the debacle that is the focus of May's book: On the final day of the voting-rights march from Selma to Montgomery in the spring of 1965, a white activist from Michigan named Viola Liuzzo was stalked by four Klansmen and shot to death; one of the men was Rowe.

Both Tommy Rowe and Karl Fleming were poor white children of the Depression-era South. Like many of their ilk, Rowe turned on his hard-up black confederates with the vehemence of what Freud called the narcissism of small differences. Fleming was different. His experience made him identify with the underdog. At age 8, he had been delivered to a Methodist orphanage in North Carolina by his mother, a washed-out, passive-aggressive widow who "ate enormous meals all the while complaining that she could 'hardly eat a mouthful.'" Fleming achieved a sense of self-reliance and discipline by way of the usual challenges—backbreaking chores and inventive play (slingshots fashioned from dogwood branches)—amid similarly lost boys called Cootie, Big Jeebie, Snot-Eye and Little Nigger. The last nickname notwithstanding, the orphanage was white-only, and young Fleming claimed no racial consciousness. The orphanage boys' turf battles with the local black kids ("soda crackers" versus "niggers"), he says, were merely contests of virility: "We had no idea what racism was." He found out in the late 1940s when, following a stint in the Navy and a couple years of college, he fell into a reporting job at the *Daily Times* of Wilson, North Carolina.

Literary treatment of the color line tends to favor the Epiphany School of Racial Consciousness, in which the white protagonist wises up to the injustice around him in a de-blinding flash. But Fleming's account bears out my sense that the "moment of truth" is more often an accrued recognition of the systemically corrupting evil of segregation. And there's nothing that drives the point home like "My First Bad Cop," as Fleming titles his chapter on the subterranean rites of segregation in Wilson. The policeman was Ray Hartis, a detective who invited the young general-assignment reporter on his rounds through "niggertown": "Come on, kid. Let's go out amongst 'em." Fleming sensed that the detective's brutality against African-Americans—he batters a gray-haired gent said to have joined the "N-Double-Fuckin'-A-C-P"—was more than the sadism of an individual, and that his psychotic misanthropy was fueled by fury at the hypocrisy of Wilson's society-page elite, including the prominent white doctor who had a secret black consort. Ironically, the neutral "objectivity" dictated by Fleming's press badge, while it excused him from taking a moral stand, allowed him an enlightening glimpse into the workings of segregation: Hartis "had done the dirty work of keeping the niggers in line," Fleming writes. "[The citizens] had wanted him to do it, and they hadn't wanted to know any of the unpleasant details."

That essentially sums up the FBI's "don't ask, don't tell" attitude toward Gary Thomas Rowe Jr., its star informant in the Klan. To be sure, Rowe was officially charged with keeping the Kluxers in line, but his alternative function was as the FBI's id, violently acting out Director J. Edgar Hoover's infamous animus toward the civil rights movement. Born in Savannah in 1933 (six years after Fleming), Rowe was a classic macho-loser type, a beefy, hell-raising, child-neglecting, uneducated cop wannabe who got his kicks riding around with policemen in his

Diane McWhorter is the author of Carry Me Home: Birmingham, Alabama, the Climactic Battle of the Civil Rights Revolution *(Simon & Schuster) and a young-adult history of the Movement,* A Dream of Freedom *(Scholastic).*

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BITTERNESS

I don't even know whom this bitterness is for.
—Vallejo

Water was just mirage, just down the road.
Air so empty, sky so deep, I recognized a blue
I'd seen only once before,

on the ceiling of a church I'd stepped into
somewhere in Italy: pure ultramarine,
the most expensive grade.

Beneath such sky,
how could the heart not aspire to dryness?
The Arizona air made everything clear:

shadows had never been so sharp.
You could cut yourself on one,
yet I longed to be taken in.

I reached out to touch, not my beloved,
but a cactus—I don't know why.
It seemed so near, I reached for a mountain peak

as if to test the blade of a knife.
The slopes were blushing: you were dying,
sun. Again. Theatrically,

you hung my little medal of pain
on your chest, waiting for it to melt.
You flung yourself down one last valley.

What good the sad twists of the one road up?
Let moon and coyote fight over it.
The road turned blue. The dry wash barked.

Where was the coldness of love
called "water" in those parts? I don't know
for whom that bitterness was meant, but I drank.

Debora Greger

adopted city of Birmingham, Alabama. In 1960 26-year-old Rowe's Walter Mitty fantasies came true when the FBI offered to pay him to join the Klan—with whose members he already fraternized—and report on its activities. Only after Rowe "infiltrated" Birmingham's flagship Klan chapter, Eastview 13, did the group begin to make its mark as the most violent organization of racists in the country. In Eastview's newsmaking debut, on Mother's Day 1961, Rowe and his Klan brethren appeared at the Birmingham Trailways station to greet the Freedom Riders—an interracial protest group integrating bus terminals across the South—and, with the blessings of the local police, beat them bloody. Although the FBI knew of the plot in advance, it did nothing either to stop the assault or to protect the Freedom Riders; nor did it move against the known perpetrators after the fact, perhaps because its own informant was photographed throwing some punches.

From then on, fearful of Hoover's bureaucratic wrath—and well-aware of their informant's fickle relationship with the truth—Rowe's FBI handlers would keep their sinking doubts to themselves: Did he prevent the Klan from committing even more atrocities (May concludes that in two or three cases Rowe did avert some mayhem), or would the worst crimes have ever occurred if his double life as a Klansman hadn't enjoyed the protection of the FBI? When Rowe's klavern-mates bombed Birmingham's 16th Street Baptist Church in September 1963, killing four black girls, FBI agents were worried enough about Rowe's possible participation in this quadruple child-murder that they withheld his picture from the photographs of suspects routinely shown to potential witnesses. (May is agnostic on whether Rowe was directly involved.)

On the Sunday of the Birmingham church bombing, the parallel careers of Rowe and Fleming, who otherwise had nothing in common but a humble pedigree and a drinking habit, finally intersected. While the FBI wrung its dirty hands, Fleming arrived on the scene with his notebook to record the agony of the victims' families. In both *The Informant* and *Son of the Rough South*, the descriptions of that apocalypse are undramatically perfunctory, reflecting a trend I have observed over years of reading books about the civil rights era. Often as soon as the story reaches the turning points that are its raison d'être—the Freedom Rides, the Birmingham firehose-and-police-dog demonstrations—the writing goes slack, as if with fatigue. Certainly,

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the volume of material already in print on the subject would cause any writer's imagination to seize up. But I think too that there is no moral vocabulary to encompass the relentless transgressions against human decency that are the counterpoint narrative of the civil rights struggle, and when an author tries to register the appropriate outrage, the call of the cliché becomes irresistible.

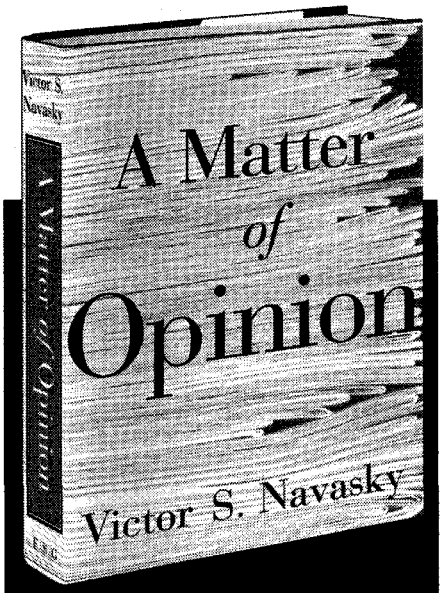
Whereas Fleming's craft soars to a level of artful elegance in the early chapters, with blunt, unsentimental language full of casual grace notes, his writing about the Movement milestones tends toward hurried exposition connecting rather unreflective descriptions of physical conflict. (And the basic chronological errors—placing the Freedom Rides in 1960 rather than 1961—seem almost perverse coming from a reporter whose work is a primary source for scholars in the field.) White rioters shoot at Fleming in Oxford, Mississippi, during the campus riot over James Meredith's integration of Ole Miss in 1962; during a 1963 Birmingham race riot, "Colonel" Al Lingo, the head of the Alabama State Highway Patrol, pokes him in the gut with a shotgun; in Philadelphia, Mississippi, Deputy Cecil Price stonewalls him right after delivering Chaney, Schwerner and Goodman to the Klan ambush. The most satisfying example of Fleming's civil rights moxie is not the macho showdowns with fellow rough Southerners but the prim dinner party he threw in Atlanta in the early 1960s, integrated by a black college professor. "Nobody dared have too much to drink," Fleming notes. "The risk of saying something improper was too great." It becomes clear what a far frontier this mercifully truncated evening was when *Atlanta Constitution* editor Ralph McGill calls Fleming for step-by-step advice on how to hold his first interracial soiree—e.g., alert the local precinct that blacks will be visiting your all-white neighborhood so that the police won't arrest them. Though Fleming graciously declines to make the point, it's remarkable that he, the young novitiate, had to offer such guidance to McGill, the revered patron saint of the South's tiny cult of white racial apostates.

The writerly challenge faced by Gary May—a history professor at the University of Delaware (whom I have met professionally and occasionally provided information from my Gary Thomas Rowe files)—is how to conjure up a multidimensional narrative from the low life of a Klansman. Rowe is a ludicrously grandiose figure, a pathological liar with a surprising, poignant streak of altruism. But the paradoxical problem of letting his Klan exploits speak for themselves is that eventually they start to seem more ridiculous than heinous. ("Fred Henson, the [KKK] hypnotist, was the first member of Eastview Klavern to hear about the little black boy in Odenville.") And so, while the civil rights razzle-dazzle in Fleming's book seems almost like an afterthought to a passionate *Bildungsroman*, Rowe's active FBI service during the Movement heyday proves to be the preamble to *The Informant*'s truly Shakespearean second half.

Viola Liuzzo arrived in Alabama with symmetric inevitability in the spring of 1965, as the Klan was preparing its rejoinder to the huge voting-rights march from Selma to Montgomery. Though she lived in Detroit, Liuzzo was, like Rowe, a hard-luck Southerner with a checkered marital history; her daughter described Liuzzo's third marriage, to a Teamster official (and, May reveals, accused extortionist), as "a combination of 'I Love Lucy' and 'Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf.'" Also like Rowe, Liuzzo had quixotic aspirations, though hers were to bring about social justice. Balancing motherhood (she had five children), a tumultuous marriage, and the pursuit of respectable work and a college degree unhinged her in early 1963; "She had the idea that if she didn't admit herself to the hospital," her psychiatrist explained, "she might kill herself and her family." In March 1965, not long after watching news footage of Colonel Lingo's state troopers bludgeoning voting-rights marchers at Selma's Edmund Pettus Bridge on "Bloody Sunday," she headed to Alabama, leaving her kids in the care of her longtime best friend, Sarah Evans, who was black.

Nine days later, the children were motherless. On the final day of the march from Selma to Montgomery, Rowe and three Klan brothers pulled even with Liuzzo's Oldsmobile alongside a swamp on US Highway 80. Two of the men took aim with a .38 pistol and a shotgun, and blasted Liuzzo into history. The black teenager who was her surviving passenger reported that Liuzzo had been humming "We Shall Overcome."

When Rowe turned in his fellow Klansmen, the Liuzzo family, the US Justice Department and the public embraced the informant as a law-enforcement angel. No one asked why an undercover man on the government payroll made no effort to stop a cold-blooded execution. At the trial of the first defendant (the alleged shooter), the Klan lawyer Matt Murphy, a down-



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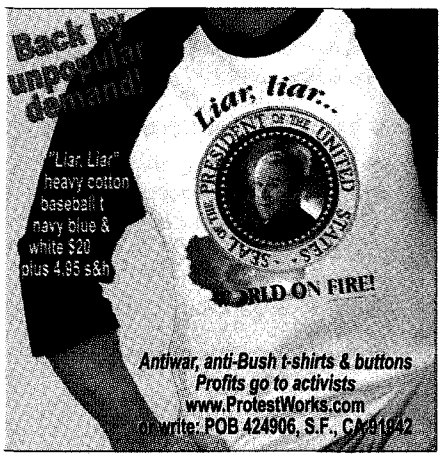
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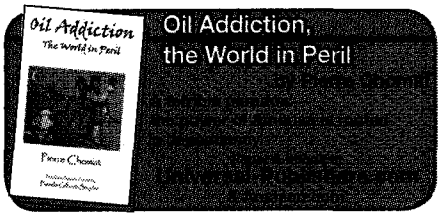

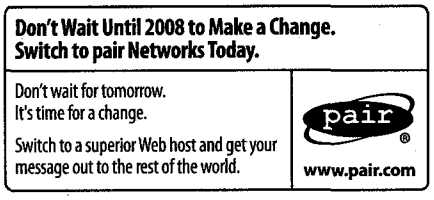
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wardly mobile alcoholic cousin of Walker Percy, the novelist of Southern aristocracy, put in a performance so grotesquely sweaty that it unglued his toupee—and landed him on the cover of *Life*. (He asked the pathologist who examined Liuzzo's corpse to describe body odors, evidence of sexual intercourse and "puncture marks in her arms at all where a hypodermic needle might have been used.") But Rowe, indistinguishable from his FBI handlers in suit and shades, presented testimony so sure-footed that, astoundingly, the jury deadlocked—ten out of twelve white men from the depths of "Bloody Lowndes" County voted for conviction, some of the ayes professing disgust with Murphy.

At the Klansman's retrial several months later, however, what passed for normalcy had returned to the Alabama courtroom. In one of the book's more surreal evocations of people walking through their imposed roles oblivious of the moral resonance, the trial professionals take to the scenic courthouse lawn during jury deliberations for a game of touch football. The prosecutors, reporters and FBI men square off against the defense lawyers, Alabama state troopers and Klansmen; they call themselves the "Outside Agitators" versus the "Local Rednecks." Though the winner of the game was not recorded, inside the courtroom the home team scored a timely acquittal. As one local put it, the jury wanted to be out before the 7:30 kickoff for the high school football game.

The Justice Department eventually nailed the three Klansmen with ten-year prison sentences on federal charges of depriving Liuzzo of her civil rights. The increasingly unmanageable Rowe was rewarded with a new identity under the Federal Witness Protection Program, a dream job as a deputy US marshal in San Diego, plus a cash sum of $10,000 for "invaluable service." By contrast, Liuzzo's family was barraged with insults to her martyrdom. One letter writer described her mission in Alabama as a quest for "black meat." A *Ladies' Home Journal* focus group of middle-class suburban women hotly insisted that she should have "stayed home and minded her own business." May neutralizes the conventional wisdom that the FBI masterminded the smears against Liuzzo in the press, though here is J. Edgar Hoover's reaction to Jim Liuzzo's request for the government's help in canceling the car payments on his dead wife's Olds, still in the custody of the State of Alabama: "Liuzzo seems more interested in cash rather than in grief over his wife's death." While the widower sank to alcoholism (and, later, arson), the five Liuzzo children ran through a Job's lot of failed marriages, social ostracism, depression, a botched illegal abortion, drug abuse, juvenile court, straitjacketed hospitalization, crummy jobs and prison. Only the FBI's outstanding debt to the devil offered the Liuzzos any hope of redemption.

The government had tried to terminate its Faustian bargain with Rowe in 1967, severing him from the payroll on account of his brawling, boozing and lying. Broke and woebegone within three years, Rowe hired a lawyer to help him bedevil his former employer. In December 1975, donning a Klannish mask for identity protection, Rowe testified about his problematic career before Senator Frank Church's Committee on Government Operations. With Hoover dead and the country repentant over the sins committed during his reign, Rowe became a celebrity FBI whistleblower cum Klan slayer, complete with a commercially published memoir called *My Undercover Years with the Ku Klux Klan*.

And then it was onto the next identity crisis.

Backed by a polygraph, two of the Klansmen who had chased down Viola Liuzzo (the third had died) appeared on ABC's newsmagazine *20/20*, saying that the triggerman had actually been the FBI's own informant. A few months after the show aired in July 1978, an Alabama grand jury indicted Rowe for Liuzzo's murder. The charges were dismissed on appeal (and May, whose research is authoritative, concludes that Rowe was not the shooter). But the paradigm had finally shifted. In July 1979, the Liuzzo children sued the FBI in federal court, seeking $2 million in damages for the wrongful death of their mother.

There are many stomach-turning passages in *The Informant*, but the ones that sickened me most concerned the Justice Department lawyers' exertions to annihilate the Liuzzos' legal claim. Though the destructive *folie à deux* between Rowe and the FBI arguably grew out of incremental and ultimately banal negligence more than malice, the scorched-earth tactics of the Justice attorneys to defend that relationship beggar the moral imagination. In pretrial depositions one lawyer abusively challenged the children to explain why their mother's life was worth any money. Echoing the South's blame-the-victim bad faith, another Justice attorney tried in vain to make Liuzzo's psychiatrist say that she had a "death wish." After

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casting her murder as a suicide, the government gratuitously painted Rowe, in May's words, as "the real injured party." The judge returned a decision resoundingly in the government's favor, and then went the extra mile, ordering the Liuzzos to pay the Justice Department's legal costs. Tony Liuzzo, who had faithfully honored the social-justice agenda for which his mother died, joined the antigovernment ranks of the Michigan Militia, even though its other notable cause was white supremacy.

The unrelenting cruelty and sorrow described in both *The Informant* and *Son of the Rough South* make one marvel at how the country has been able to finesse from this record of shame one of our most uplifting national myths, about the fulfillment of a dream of freedom. Even for the relatively fortunate Karl Fleming, the date with Movement destiny turned out to be a prelude to personal descent: alcoholism, mental breakdown and professional humiliation when the Los Angeles weekly he founded folded in 1972 after he published an interview with a con man claiming to be the legendary skyjacker D.B. Cooper. Looking back across the wreckage, Fleming sees his Movement days as a postponement of the inevitable reckoning with his fate as an orphan of history.

Fleming happened to be in Mississippi on his book tour in June when Preacher Killen went on trial there. The old civil rights hand wrote an op-ed piece for the *Los Angeles Times* recalling the moonshine-swilling mob that had greeted him forty-one years ago, when he and the *New York Times*'s Claude Sitton had been the first two national reporters to show up in Philadelphia after the disappearance of Chaney, Schwerner and Goodman. This time around, the local women baked cookies for the outside media, who had come to bear witness to the town's redemption. At least Fleming got to partake in Philadelphia's reconciliationist largesse. So often in the reconstructed South, it seems, the healing process works chiefly to the benefit of those who did not suffer the wounds. ■

FILMS

Time Out of Mind

STUART KLAWANS

2046 • BROKEN FLOWERS • DARWIN'S NIGHTMARE

There are no ordinary shots in Wong Kar Wai's *2046* and no ordinary sounds—which is remarkable, given that you've seen and heard everything before. Latin-beat pop hits of the 1960s alternate on the soundtrack with Callas's favorite Bellini arias, while familiar old-movie types—the pencil-mustached dandy with the pocket handkerchief, the sheath-dressed beauty with upswept eyelashes and foot-high hair—eye each other on murky staircases, or float in the aquarium lighting of the hotel room where they make love, or sometimes just stand and pose against a wall, whose surface (you may depend on it) will be interestingly distressed and richly colored. Each moment seems not so much experienced as recollected, either from previous Wong Kar Wai films (*In the Mood for Love*, *Days of Being Wild*) or from a still-earlier cinematic glow, which Wong filters for you as if through a prism.

Even the big novelty of *2046*—Wong's use, for the first time, of computer-generated sci-fi imagery—has a reminiscent air, since these fragments of a film-within-the-film represent the imaginings of a 1960s pulp writer. Their shopworn futurism makes a touchingly thin and plasticky disguise for the protagonist's yearnings, which he focuses not on the years to come but on a past that was beautiful but didn't work out.

You've heard that one before. You've seen it, too. But from moment to moment, Wong makes it new.

Now in case you're coming in late, I should explain that Chow (Tony Leung Chiu Wai), the nightclubbing writer who narrates *2046*, has shown up at least twice before in Wong's films. He, or someone like him, appeared suddenly and without explanation at the end of *Days of Being Wild*, Wong's first great reverie about love and longing in 1960s Hong Kong.

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It seemed as if Wong were cutting short a story he wanted to continue; and sure enough, when almost a decade later he made *In the Mood for Love*, he showed how Su Lizhen (Maggie Cheung), a figure from *Days of Being Wild*, tumbled into a deep, doomed and very stylish romance with Chow.

Now, in *2046*, we find Chow still mourning the loss of Su Lizhen and still running into the occasional *Wild* character (notably a nightclub showgirl known alternately as Mimi and Lulu, played by Carina Lau). For the most part, though, Chow concerns himself in this movie with three other impossible loves. From 1966 through 1969, he aches over the memory of a tough but benevolent gambler (Gong Li) who had sheltered him in Singapore; acts like a heel with a new lover (Ziyi Zhang), a feisty but fragile bar girl who lives next door to him at his cheap hotel; and forms a close, tender but chaste attachment with the hotelkeeper's daughter (Faye Wong), who cannot give herself to Chow because she's got her own impossible love to brood over. Still, this third woman makes a great writing partner, whose collaboration with Chow gives him his "happiest summer ever," while providing Wong with the heart of *2046*.

The heart, though, is what my summary hasn't begun to touch. To come closer to it—to suggest how *2046* makes something exceptional out of Chow's memories, which are so few and potentially so banal—I need to talk about two of the constants of Wong's art, or for that matter of life in general: time and money.

The first of these has been a preoccupation of Wong's since *Days of Being Wild*, with its omnipresent clocks, its elegiac voiceovers and, most of all, its main protagonist's pickup line: Be with me for just one minute, and you'll remember that time forever. This theme of the moment that will never end also figures prominently in *2046*, a title that signifies a place (a hotel room), a year (when Hong Kong, finally merged into China, will lose the last of its special status) and perhaps even a time of day (8:46 PM) that Chow will remember forever. What do these different types of 2046 have in common? Chow thinks of them all as changeless. They should be end points, but he somehow goes on from them, though on his own and in pain.

There's a thin barrier, with this stuff, between playfulness and preciosity. Wong stays on the right side of the line thanks to another of his perennial interests, money and how it's used. Just as cash was exchanged from the very start of *Days of Being Wild*, when the flirting protagonist bought a bottle of pop from Su Lizhen, so too does cash change hands throughout *2046*, to the point that you might define Chow's development through his transactions. He abjectly receives money from a woman, under the pretext of accepting a business deal. He pays money to another woman, coldly, to keep her at a distance. And at the end of *2046*, he hands money, generously and freely, to a woman in need. That scene gives him what is probably his finest moment—not so much for the kindness he now shows to a former lover as for the self-awareness he expresses. Chow is finally clear about what he can offer and what he needs to hold back; and his medium for both parts of this give-and-take is a wad of limp, greasy bills.

Money in *2046* is generally something that Chow gambles away, or cadges through dishonest schemes, or earns quickly and contemptuously by writing stories he doesn't care about. It's like the scenes of political strife that flicker briefly through his consciousness: part of an earthbound, everyday reality that he'd rather ignore. Time, meanwhile, is the reality that Chow doesn't want to escape; it's not a flow but a cluster of remembered moments, some of which recur through odd coincidences, or expand into his stories, or surround him like the walls of a hotel room. Time is the

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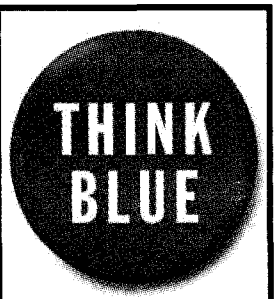

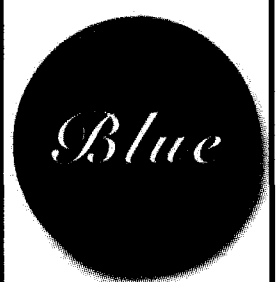

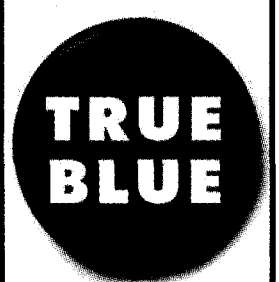

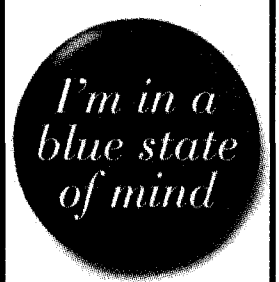

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glamour, the fantasy, the romance over which Chow wants to linger; money is the mundane stuff that makes him move on.

You can see the struggle between the two being played out everywhere in *2046*, but especially in the face of Chow. Think of Clark Gable, not only because of the mustache and slick black hair but because of the dimpled smile, which breaks open so readily over his cocksure features. As Chow, Tony Leung Chiu Wai enjoys the grace of a movie star's looks, grooming, clothes and lighting; but while his lips grin, the eyebrows frown, registering a perpetual disappointment. It's a wonderfully composed and inward performance. If I'm right that its finest moment comes at the end, when Chow achieves a new gravity, then its happiest, paradoxically, must be when this sauntering womanizer is sick in bed, with the hotelkeeper's daughter sitting nearby finishing his latest story.

We used to have a term for such artworks, which turn away from the turmoils of the world to dwell privately, exquisitely, on a sensuous pessimism. They were said to be decadent—a word that I would revive, without prejudice, for *2046*, since I can think of no other way to address this secretive, intimate, gorgeous and very peculiar masterpiece.

Can a film in this mode find an audience today? That remains to be seen. All I know is that the answer will tell us something about ourselves—and that it's been ages since we've had such a good swoon.

In its shaggy-dog way, Jim Jarmusch's new film, *Broken Flowers*, makes a good companion to *2046*, since it, too, is the story of a womanizer and his memories. This character, played in minimalist style by Bill Murray, is an affluent "over-the-hill Don Juan" named Don Johnston, who sits numbly on his couch watching a television broadcast of *The Private Life of Don Juan*. He's depressed, you see, because his lover has just walked out on him. She wants a child; he doesn't. But then comes an anonymous letter, telling him he's already got offspring: a 19-year-old son, whose mother might be any one of several women from a past that Don doesn't want to revisit.

No matter—his next-door neighbor (Jeffrey Wright) wants Don to revisit it and with great enthusiasm draws up an itinerary for him, complete with flight times, motel reservations and a specially burned CD of Ethiopian music to play in the rental cars. Numbly, though with frequent grumbling, Don follows the instructions and so begins a road trip into four different versions of the American landscape, there

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to have increasingly tense conversations with four of his former lovers (Sharon Stone, Frances Conroy, Jessica Lange and Tilda Swinton).

Like Murray, who here does his acting mostly with his eyelids, Jarmusch does not want his work to show. By my count, there is only one directorial gesture in *Broken Flowers*, and it comes at the very end, so it reads like punctuation. Nevertheless, there's a sneaky ambition at work in this movie, which deals with parenthood, mortality, class resentment, the housing market, interspecies communication, midlife sexuality and the wonders of the postal service, all without raising its voice above a conversational tone or its pace above an amble. Though quiet and quizzical almost to a fault, *Broken Flowers* turns out to be one of Jarmusch's biggest films.

When it comes to big subjects, though, no one can be more ambitious than Hubert Sauper in his documentary *Darwin's Nightmare*. Nothing less than the world is at stake—though at the start, Sauper pretends he's simply telling us about a food fish.

The species in question is the Nile perch, which was introduced into Tanzania's Lake Victoria in the 1960s and today is shipped out on cargo planes in fifty-ton loads. *Darwin's Nightmare* begins as the success story of the economy built on this fish; as the owner of one factory puts it, "All the towns on the shore depend totally on Nile perch." You hear the same judgment from a visiting panel of European development officials: Nile perch has created a thriving export economy.

But through nocturnal interviews and forays into forbidding landscapes, Sauper pieces together a larger story that is not so happy. While the fish fillets are being shipped out, there is famine in Tanzania. The locals feed themselves by foraging through the maggot-infested fishery dumps. For the women, the fisheries provide jobs in the sex trade, fueled at the high end by foreign cargo pilots. For street kids whose parents died of AIDS, the fisheries provide plastic bags, which render a glue to be sniffed. War has come to seem like a rational opportunity for the surviving men; and the fisheries help with that, too, since the planes that go out with Nile perch come in with munitions. As for the fish itself: It is a predator that has destroyed every other species and is now eating its own young in a lake that is rapidly dying.

Darwin's Nightmare is a film that demands to be seen. The question is, Can anyone bear to watch? ■

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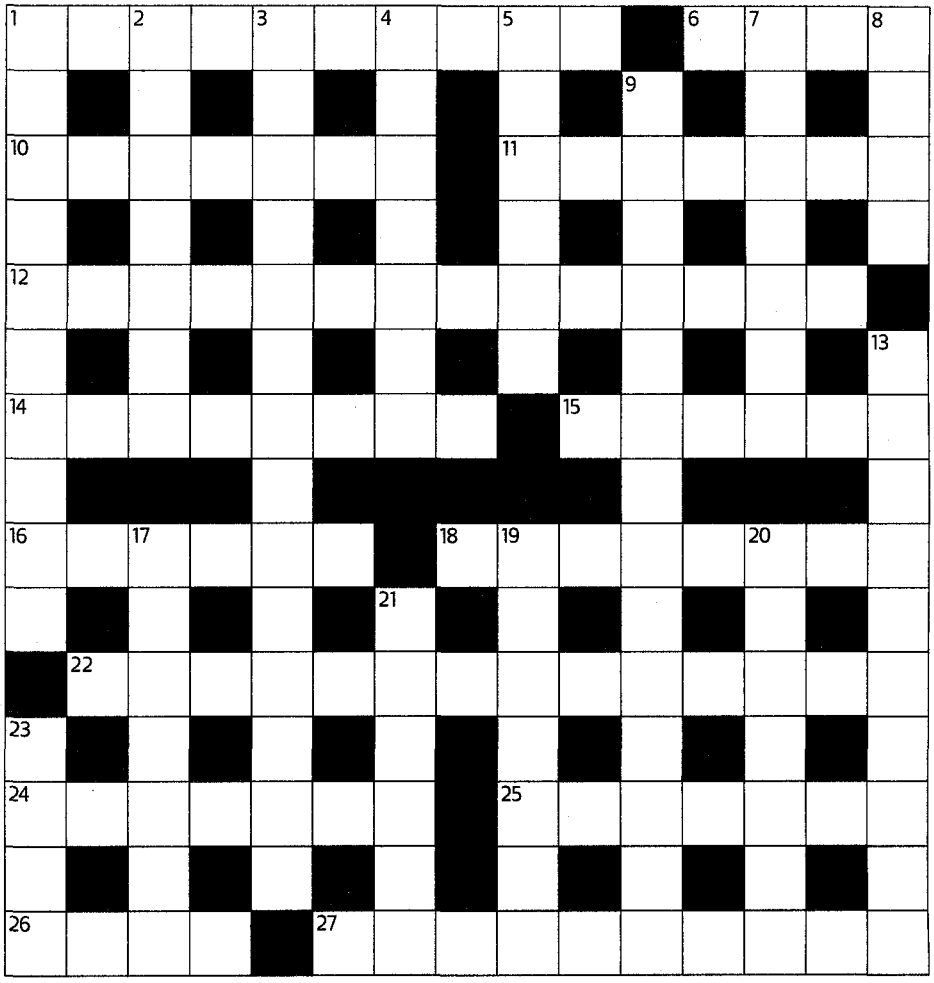

ACROSS

1 Does it only keep time during the dark hours, according to Rembrandt? (5,5)

6 Nathan was evidently hearty, in addition. (4)

10 The examination is about everything, particularly the Most High. (7)

11 Delightfully rampant where the flowers are, and made a lot of color in a cheeky way. (7)

12 They are stepped on often by the weight conscious, but are not intended to show the relative importance of tubby areas. (8,6)

14 A bit less than winter underwear, particularly associated silver, properly speaking. (4-4)

15 Rock ice melts and loses a kilometer—important in Old Rome and modern Illinois. (6)

16 and **23** down An engaging behavior, but also inclined to shoplifting. (6,4)

18 Inventing a story, as a girl might be found doing before going out and starting this by saying, "I'm sorry!" (6,2)

22 Perhaps a sandwich—with not much fat put on by the German pair, classically. (4,3,7)

24 One who says you did it is of little account to the manipulator. (7)

25 An old instrument set incorrectly to be typically blue in the air. (7)

26 Takes the energy out of sentimental types! (4)

27 The last battle to supply weapons to an old Spanish gentleman. (10)

DOWN

1 An outstanding quality, but evidently lacking capacity. (10)

2 What one stands on, coming up with a British container of some glutinous product. (7)

3 Stuffed animal that enabled the capture of a city. (3,6,5)

4 Old city college, seemingly against what a Scotsman traditionally has to say. (7)

5 The type of artist who needs a little bear to sort of sit for him. (6)

7 Accomplish something, though perhaps I've taken some pains to get around it. (7)

8 Stops making whatever purposes are shown. (4)

9 Whoever would want to purchase anything like Babe in a bonnet? *Caveat emptor*! (3,1,3,2,1,4)

13 Supposedly one of those odious things that show a British politician takes improper airs on. (10)

17 This makes the joint rather keen to have top covering. (7)

19 Dirty deposits show everything takes a U-turn by way of this. (7)

20 Some say it's welcome as a wild dog's tail. (7)

21 What makes a noise in the night? (6)

23 See 16 across

PUZZLED? No more cross words. If you don't see why "Lures" are "Ground Rules" send for those of Mr. Lewis to: Puzzled, The Nation, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003, or access our website at www.thenation.com/about/crossword.mhtml.

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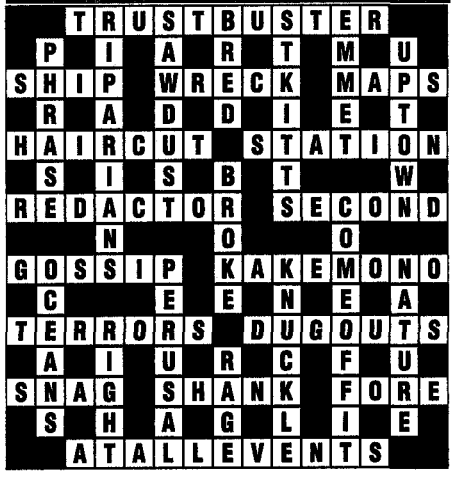

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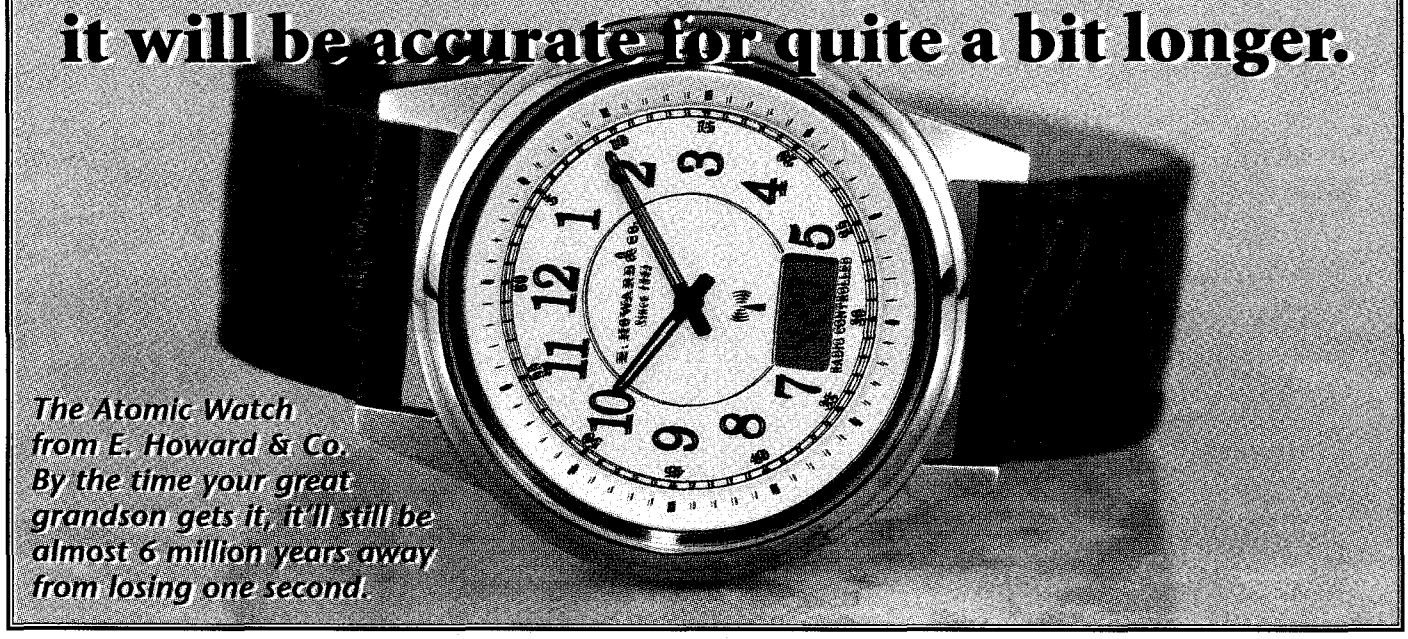

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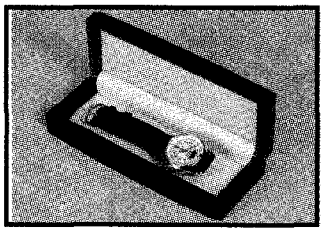

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